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LITTLE ESSAY  
IN  
LITERATURE  
AND  
LIFE



RICHARD BURTON







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App



**Little Essays  
in  
Literature and Life**



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**Little Essays  
in  
Literature and Life**

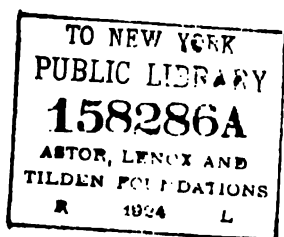
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ARTS AND LETTERS**



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TO MY FRIEND  
WILLIAM C. EDGAR

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Most of these papers have appeared in the columns of *The Bellman*, and my thanks are due the editor and proprietor for the courteous permission to reprint them herewith.



## FOREWORD

The way of the familiar essay is one, of the formal essay another. The latter is informational, it defines, proves; the former, seeking for friendlier and more personal relations with the reader, aims at suggestion, stimulation. The familiar essay can be an impressionistic reflection of the author's experience in the mighty issues of living, or it may be the frank expression of a mere whim. It should touch many a deep thing in a way to quicken the sense of the charm, wonder, and terror of the earth. The essayist can fly high, if he but have wings, and he can dive deeper than any plummet line of the intellect, should it happen that the spirit move him.

It is thus the ambition of the familiar essayist to speak wisdom albeit debonairly, to be thought-provoking without heaviness, and helpful without didacticism. Keenly does he feel the *lacrymae rerum*, but, sensitive to the laughable incongruities of human existence, he has a safeguard against the merely solemn and can smile at himself or others, preserving his sense of humor as a precious gift of the high gods. And





## **Foreword**

most of all, he loves his fellow men, and would come into fellowship with them through thought that is made mellow by feeling. If these qualities are lacking in the papers that follow, it is but an example of the difference between desire and deed.



**Nature**



## LITTLE ESSAYS IN LITERATURE AND LIFE

### Immemorial Fires

**A**S the green gives way to the gold, and the browns and russet reds mingle in the landscape, while overhead the haze of autumn softens and makes infinitely suggestive the mood of Nature, comes once more the well-remembered tang, the pungent smell of smoke from innumerable fires. From boyhood it has been for me (and surely for many others) a provocative memory, atmospheric with associations.

I recall, from far-off fields among the upland hills, in the glad vacation time, how a boy, playing at hare and hounds, got the scent in his nostrils and, as he panted on toward the desired end, was in some strange way assisted by the familiar odor; it seemed almost an accompanying friend. Let him but savor it now, and the intervening years roll back, and across the chasm of half a lifetime arise the look and the voice of childhood. Or, turning a corner of the road, he is suddenly confronted with a band of gipsies, camped beside the way; dark, mystic folk, immensely exciting to a

## Little Essays in Literature and Life

lad's imagination. They converse in a tongue which has all the lure of the alien and the unknown; the garish picturesqueness of their garb is but an outward symbol of their higher spiritual implication; they tell fortunes, they know the stars, wind, and weather are their familiars, and, most of all, like Whittier's "vanishers," they are up and away when you are unaware, exulting in open-air liberty, disdaining to be bound by the fixed conventions and day-long duties of commonplace mankind. And ever, as their colorful forms take shape out of the time-mists, I see the spiral twists of smoke from their campfires crawl up into the blue air, and again the smell of autumn and of youth challenges my soul.

Or it may be, far up the side of the New England mountain, the same boy is camping out with his mates; on the very edge of the wood-line they lie; a few steps higher, and the bare, rugged, serrated boulders climb straight to the summit, wind-swept and splendid. Many hours has it taken to reach this place of shelter, and the little band of adventurers is wet and cold and hungry. A striking scene in *chiaroscuro* they make, as one bends down to give hand-shelter to the all-important match; a scratch, a glimmer, and it is well, for, the sticks being gathered, the fire is alight, and soon, drawn together in a circle that is older than civilization, they swap stories while the kettle boils, prepare their food and look up, now and then, in a sleepy half-wonder, at the calm great stars seen through a

## Immemorial Fires

somber setting of forest trees. Stand away a little from the fire, to windward, and get the drift of the smoke. There it is again, not a smell, but an evocation of comradeship, and a friendly call out of the past!

Stand with me, too, for a moment and lean against the old fence rail, as you let the eye in deep contentment range over a field where, in admirable rank and file, the corn shocks stretch away; like so many Indian chiefs they stand, sedate, dignified, in a beautiful tonality of yellow and brown and gray. And from somewhere, on the field's edge, drifts once more the smoke of a hidden fire of leaves and brush, and as it ascends into the winy upper sky it appears, seen through the fruitful rows, as if these silent braves were gravely smoking the pipe of peace. Nay, if you will but listen, is not that rustle that comes to the ear the echo of the murmur of the Indian speech, as these wise ones of the open places whisper the sacred secrets of their tribe?

But not personal only are such memories, summoned up by the fires of autumn; racial are they, too, an atavistic reminder of our forefathers in days of eld. We began this way, we denizens of the town; and let but that perfume of the soul of leaves get in our nostrils, and there is a stirring, vague yet strong, of happenings that well-nigh antedate the years. Beside such a fire, in Time's very dawn, once knelt the son of man; beside it, too, he ate his simple meal, ere he resumed the trail and faced the perilous future.

## Little Essays in Literature and Life

To look forward to it on the march, or after the hunt, was as a beacon of hope; all the cheer and consolation of home rose in his mind with its smoky spirals, and the crackling of its flame was as the call of kin across gloomed, lost places. Its red eye through the wood promised protection at the day's end; the wild beasts slunk away, as did two-footed enemies, at sight of that sign of habitation, and the presence of that social odor. If the Promethean gift of fire brought the dawn of civilization, the camp-fire smoke and the smell of burnt leaves or clean, sweet boughs accompany man's passage out of the unknown into history. For the Israelite by day, the symbol of the pillar of cloud; but by night, the pillar of fire.

And with all our boasted gain in creature comfort, how glad are the epicure and the aristocrat to return to this primitive thing, the open fire, indoors and out! How he revels in the household group before the blaze, with swept hearth and apples a-toasting; while, beyond the confines of the housed-in life, he doubly relishes his simple food, if but it be prepared by the roadside or midwood fire, and eaten beneath sun or stars, in that "great, good place, outdoors." After all, we seem not to have come so far, despite all the devices and agencies of social evolution, when still to-day we can derive no greater comfort than from that which the Phœnician knew, the Egyptian welcomed, the red man cherished; yes, and the caveman must have used. The smoke-drift of their experience

## Immemorial Fires

mingles with and makes mellow the time-drift of the years, and by a sweet, ancient odor are we all united. After all, the fire is still the great symbol of home. As Kipling says:

How can I answer which is best  
Of all the fires that burn?  
I have been too often host and guest  
At every fire in turn.

And so it is that this month of October, the wine month, as the Hollanders call it, brings in its recurrent splendor, its sober majesty, along with other gifts and tokens not a few, this gift of fires that purify dead matter, with the attendant smoke that is a spiritual note in the autumn landscape and evocative of many far-ranging memories for the individual and the race. It is a month that breeds reminiscence; a month in which Lamb might have written "The Old Familiar Faces," or Landor penned the unforgettable lines to the memoried maiden:

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes  
May weep but never see,  
A night of memories and of sighs  
I consecrate to thee.

October! Like Keats's "farewell," "the very sound is like a bell"; a rich, chiming, deep-voweled word in whose reverberations, so many and so wide, I find this memory of fires by field and wayside and wood, with the fragrant scent of wind-born smoke and a magic out of old, old times.



## The Miracle Called Spring

EVER since man's imagination found expression in literature, spring has been limned in the figure of a coquette. And small wonder, we exclaim, as we are compelled once again to endure the tantalizing probation which ushers in the glad, recurrent miracle.

March is here, and, like her blustering winds, blows our hopes everywhere, till we scarce know if it be a winter face or a smile of June that peeps at us around the corner. Then, while we catch our breath, April, bewitching, maddening blend of tears and laughter, never sure, ever promiscuous, comes tripping by and, with a blithe bow at last, lets in the scented magic and the divine foretaste of the full summertime that goes under the name of May.

Strange it is, too, how spring, teasing us thus yearly, and known in all her ways, can yet keep back so much of surprise and offer so greatly of variety that her coming bids our pulses beat and our eyes dilate as before a bit of legerdemain. The mere instinctive boy turns livelier and merrier; the gaffer in the sun feels at his withered heart a touch that warms like wine. The farmer rejoices as he sows his seed, and remembers that he, of all men, has an occupation the freest and

## The Miracle Called Spring

noblest, since he looks alone to Nature and Nature's God. And the man of religion points a moral from the season with the parable of rebirth, and speaks with the more assurance of the Resurrection and the Life.

Modern thought inclines to consider a miracle not so much a violation of Nature's laws as a new and at first unbelievable revelation of Nature's larger powers. And spring, with all it implies, would be a miracle indeed, were it seen for the first time. Who, without seeing it, would put credence in the stirring of the dry earth to give forth tender, green shoots, or have faith in the vital urge wherefrom the sap runs up in the trees and a shower of apple-blossoms fills all the air with fragrance? But we behold it annually, and we come to trust this sweet and splendid reawakening after the winter sleep, and our joy falls instinctively into the matchless rhythm of "The Song of Songs":

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

## Little Essays in Literature and Life

This outer magic of change from winter to spring, from stagnation to the life-throb which shall bring fruition, makes an inward miracle in man: love awakes and the divine unrest we call wanderlust, and hope that scales heaven's gate. If the young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love, the fancy of all men at this season of lovely witchery expands with a sense of the infinite possibilities offered by the world, a sense of the bliss that would break through the harsh crust of living, as the flower breaks through the sod. Gipsy longing seizes upon the most sedate; the beck of the long, white road is for some of us like an imperative command; beyond the horizon lie our hopes, our dreams, like many-colored clouds at sunset. "Out into the open" cries the heart, and the legs are fain to follow.

Oh, to dream, Oh, to awake and wander  
There, and with delight to take and render  
Through the trance of silence  
Quiet breath,

— as Stevenson sings it; and Bliss Carman, with a pantheistic worship in his soul, invokes April as a young goddess whose touch is potent to change us all.

And thy great heart beats and quivers  
To revive the days that were;  
Make me over, Mother April,  
When the sap begins to stir!

There is in this summons of the spring, deeper than its blind instinct of joy and higher than its strongest

## The Miracle Called Spring

lure of earthy rapture, a spiritual note of promise that is yet peace; here, perhaps, is its noblest service to mankind. Joy is good, but adoration is better still. The mind that, looking out upon the beauty of the fourth month, is not aware of thoughts that are holy and wise, is barren indeed, and closed about in a winter mood of negation and death. Wordsworth, from his land of lakes and fells, sent us many such messages, as when he sang:

One impulse from a vernal wood,  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good  
Than all the sages can.

And England's mighty nature poet meant it, for he knew that the intuitions and emotions grasp truth forever shut away from the processes of the brain; knew, moreover, that nothing in God's breathing universe stirs us to the depths more surely than the emanations of April and the ministries of May.

Summer in her completeness is just ahead, to be sure. It might seem that summer were a better time. But, no, the early hint is more precious: herein is the difference between promise and performance. The imagination is a wonder-worker, and the half becomes more than the whole, in nature, even as it is in art.

So, for many reasons, where no reason but the natural response to a beautiful thing is necessary, we welcome the annual return and happy harbinger of

## Little Essays in Literature and Life

Nature's mood of benison and bounty. If it delay we are sorely tried, yet are not as those without hope. And when it arrives, we are "like them that dream," dazed with delight and heady intoxication of sense and spirit. Never, we say, was it quite so rare and riant as this year; never the birds so blithe, the flowers so full of scent, the very smile of earth and sky so eloquent of innumerable pledges and tokens. No time, this, for the cheap mockery of spring and the songs of spring, whereby wretched would-be humorists gain a dubious livelihood, like obnoxious insects befouling the candid petal of a rich red rose. Away with aught but joy and exaltation, belief in beauty and thankfulness at being alive, that we are still a-pulse, and parts, however small, of the processional splendor of the season. The coming of spring, to our sense of poetry, explains the winter; never could the one be so fair, unless the other came before, to make the contrast:

For the sweetest of all seasons  
Is that which follows pain,  
And the best of winter's reasons,  
Is the summer here again.

## Owning the Earth

"MY idea of riches is to own the earth," was the whimsical remark of a friend of mine, whose holdings of real estate are large. It was an expression of that love of landed possessions, that zest for contact with the soil, which in the United States is now so commonly familiar, and in a country like England has led to one man owning a county, and has become almost a national instinct. Doubtless, it is this feeling for the possession of the earth we walk on, which constitutes one of the obstacles to all communistic or socialistic theories of land-holding.

The idea is certainly capable of abuse and has its bad side; but also it is deeply implanted in man, and many good things have come from its exercise. One who owns land in freehold is stimulated thereby to work his doughtiest, with good cheer, led on by hope. See such a man dig into his soil, and compare him with the day-laborer who, with dull iteration, handles his spade against the coming of mealtime. He has no relation to, no affection for, the spot he stands on. He lacks rootage.

There is rest for the weary, too, in the chance to escape from the madding crowd and get behind his

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private defenses after bearing the brunt of the combat. Carry this too far, and you become antisocial; but it has a legitimate use, beyond question, and the worker goes back all the more fitted for social service, who can get somewhere on his own acres and feel that there is a fence or a hedge between him and interruption for a few hours. To ring around your possession with a fence or other sign of demarcation is to experience the deeper content of privacy. The full joy of asking friends to share your pleasure in your own can be tasted only when you set apart the particular section of earth which is yours in some such fashion from the rest of the world. You get satisfaction in showing a friend the fine views in a public park; but what is that contrasted with the zest with which you point out the autumnal coloring in your own wood, or listen to his exclamations of delight at the river which winds its way between your ancestral banks! The English, behind their walls and hedges, have developed a home life that is one of the sources of their hereditary strength. How may the frayed nerves regain equipoise, with no barrier between you and your neighbor, whose dog is in your flower garden and his small boy kicking a football that bounds against your plate-glass window? There is a limit even to neighborliness under such circumstances.

To own the earth, again, attaches a man to one place, which is well. When man ceases to be a nomad, a long step forward in civilization has been

## Owning the Earth

made. The gipsy wanderer, he who feels the lure of the long white road and who in our time degenerates into the familiar hobo, seems to the superficial gaze a freer person than does he of the acres and local interests. But, really, it is not so; it is the other way round. "Land from the first," says the historian Green, with feudal England in mind, "was the test of freedom." He means, of course, that it was only when the farmer got freehold possession of his property that he shook off the overlordship which made him a sort of slave, and could conduct himself as an independent man. And it is the farmer, then and now, who is in a sense the most unshackled of mortals, because he looks not to man, but to Nature and to God for the results of his toil. Benjamin Franklin expressed it memorably more than a century ago: "I think agriculture the most honorable of all employments, being the most independent. The farmer has no need of popular favor nor the favor of the great, the success of his crops depending on the blessing of God upon his industry."

There is indeed a peculiar dignity about work that is steady in time and defined in space, in comparison with that which is sporadic and bears no relation to yesterday and to-morrow. And the sense of freedom comes to man not alone from the thought that below him is earth he owns, but also from the companion thought that he owns upward into the heavens. No skyscraper blocks his view; he can quote the epitaph,



## **Little Essays in Literature and Life**

derived from a well-known legal sentence and set upon the tomb of a lawyer whose reputation was of good savor :

Beneath this stone an honest lawyer lies;  
Who owns the earth, owns upward to the skies.

It is good to see how, of late years, the custom of going back to the country and getting closer to the soil, by sympathetic living on it and through acquiring it as a possession, has grown in this land. To live the simple life, as Wagner taught us to call it, an affectionate communion with Nature: surely this is a needed antidote to the congestion of the city and all its unlovely connotations. Country life is just as wholesome as a corrective now as it was in the days when Horace cried up the pleasures of his Sabine farm, and declared him happy who, afar from business, cultivated his ancestral acres in dignified retirement. How much of health and peace of mind and kindly relation to everything seems to come to one who takes to the cultivation of his own garden. How much more he gets out of it than if he were simply the salaried gardener; not so much in the literal sense, for there the gardener would be likely to beat him, but in the sense of return in terms of living. Charles Dudley Warner surely would never have had those delightful experiences which make "My Summer in a Garden" such pleasant reading, had that garden (where, by the way, I smoked hayseed as a boy) been a public

## Owning the Earth

one. Fancy such a thing! As well compare, as does Warner, a register indoors with an open fire on the hearth, or a gaslight with the sun.

"When we have come to live on the fruits of our own gardens," says Emerson in his *Journal*, "and begin to boast that we live a man's life, then shall come some audacious upstart to upbraid us with our false and foreign taste, which steadily plucks up everything which Nature puts in our soil, and laboriously plants everything not intended to grow there." The Concord sage might not have written the words to-day, when the hegira into the country is becoming so general, and the care of the ground so intelligently conducted. Few, even now, are willing to live so austere close to the bosom of Nature as did Emerson's neighbor, Thoreau, during the period of his Walden Pond experiment. But an increasing number are gladly learning the wholesome lesson set forth in the fable of Antæus: they are growing strong through contact with the earth, and thus they safely defy the Hercules of nervous wear and tear.

Of a truth, central in the experience is that feeling of ownership, a sense of possession which makes for dignity and the obligations and duties which steady men. Travel is no longer travel, unless, finally, we may turn us home.

## Our Elder Brothers

**O**UR elder brothers they have come to be called in our day, by many a deep-hearted and lofty writer, inspired to that wider world-vision which lifts him into seership. The note was struck by Coleridge in "The Ancient Mariner," when he pictured evil as issuing, so to say, with the life blood of the albatross. It sounded earlier in Sterne when, in "Tristram Shandy," he makes dear Uncle Toby release the fly with those memorable words: "Go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? The world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me."

The feeling is dominant in Browning's poem on Tray, the "mere instinctive dog" who dived down into the water and saved a little child, while the humans stood about and did nothing. It is a familiar refrain in the song of Bliss Carman, who is forever hymning the little brothers of the air and earth, the birds and beasts of forest and field and flood, who, like us mortals, have briefly the privilege of inhabiting this world. Unlike us, they can pierce the sky and burrow in the soil without the aid of machinery; but are like us again in the frail tenure which is theirs upon the life that is the common and precious possession of man and beast. The tenderness for and sym-

## Our Elder Brothers

pathy with the so-called lower animals so notable in the literature of the last hundred years, and of steadily increasing volume, mark a change that keeps pace with the new ideas of science and the better understanding of the biologic principles of life. Both science and religion, indeed, have had a hand in it. Happily, the days when civilized peoples like the Greeks or Hebrews could offer blood-sacrifices of animals, with the idea that a deity worthy the name should thus be propitiated, have passed away long since.

It is easy, of course, to make cheap fun of the idea; the penny-a-liner, like the poor, is always with us and we are too familiar with facetious references to our Simian ancestors clinging by the caudal appendage to the branches of an arboreal eld and filling primeval forests with their chatter. The cheapness of it lies in the fact that behind the silly laugh is a sober and astounding theory, which has revolutionized modern thought and given man a new conception of heaven and of earth. The Darwinian theory of the development of life upon this planet is not proved, strictly speaking; it is merely a hypothesis. But it is one which, so far as we have gone, best serves to explain the facts as we have acquired them; and for this reason it has won the acceptance, to a point of practical unanimity, of the scientific world. Among the good things it has done is to be found the influence exercised by the new view of organic processes upon man's attitude toward the lower animals. Their rights have come to be

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recognized and respected as never under the old dispensation, and "certain other duties" established in the better class of minds by the thought that ethical obligations exist here, as in human relations. The scientific teaching of the oneness of all life and the consequent removal of the former hard-and-fast line between brute and human have inevitably wrought to quicken this modern conception.

On all sides are signs of the change. Such a book as that on "Animal Rights," by the well-known English thinker, H. S. Salt, is one of many which illustrate the newer attitude. The growth of our state or private humane societies, which safeguard the interests of animals that are impressed into man's service and have suffered centuries of cruelty at his hands, is another sign. Animals slain for purposes of food are put out of existence more mercifully, because of the greater sensitiveness to their point of view.

Biological researches have put us in a position to realize more clearly the sufferings of the animal underworld. Hospitals for dogs, horses, and cats are no longer so novel as to awaken the sneering laughter of the unthoughtful and callous.

It has almost become bad form to be unnecessarily cruel to a defenseless creature whose very lack of protection should make an appeal to mercy. Soon, any cruelty, it may be surmised, will be frowned upon as uncivilized. Of old, it was common enough to hear in justification of some barbarous treatment of an

## Our Elder Brothers

animal a remark to the effect that it did not matter, since it was not a human being. "Animals, don't you know, have no souls." But these delightfully prehistoric utterances are coming to sound hopelessly old-fashioned on the lips of any one who makes the slightest pretense to be modern. It is easier for us to detect glimmers of what looks very much like "soul" in some animals; and harder to find it in some men. We may even look confidently forward to the day when a really modern mother will not allow her dear little boy to impale a beautiful butterfly upon a pin and to derive enjoyment from the slow waving of those God-painted wings, whose rhythmic beating is the innocent and lovely creature's only way of agonized protest. Yes, mothers, and their boys along with them, will be educated in the fullness of time.

It may well be that, with the further unfolding of this nobler feeling, the strained relations now existing between man and many kinds of animals will be removed. Think of the dog in the human home to-day: beloved and cherished like one of our own and mourned in his passing as if of human race! Hear those lines of Byron as he satirizes man and bemoans the loss of a canine favorite:

To mark a friend's remains these stones arise;  
I never knew but one, and here he lies.

John Muir, the naturalist, has said that he found that even the carnivora of the Rocky Mountains,

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when he camped fearlessly among them, were not his enemies; they came and sniffed at him, and departed, leaving him unmolested. And this, in spite of all the years during which the word has been handed down among them, "Beware of man and his weapons!"

One of Turgenev's wonderful "Poems in Prose" narrates how the author, on the deck of a ship in a great storm, was startled in the midst of the tempest to feel a little cold hand slip into his own. Looking down, he saw a monkey which, terrified by the tempest, had sought the man in the instinctive desire for companionship in the face of a mighty common peril. Any line of separation was obliterated in the moment when Nature was a menace to all living things. And in beautiful words Turgenev tells what a strange sensation of union with the timorous beast was produced in his mind. The incident may be taken as an allegory; it gives assurance of a day when our kindness will extend to all God's creatures, and these elder brothers of ours, so long outcast from our fellowship, shall come into their own of friendship and of love.

## The Irony of Nature

IN his delightful reminiscences, "Thirty Years of Paris," Alphonse Daudet tells of his companionship with Turgenev in those memorable evenings when he, Goncourt, Zola, and the mighty Russian ate supper together and talked of literature and life. He recalls how Turgenev gave him every evidence of friendship and affection; but long after his death, Daudet read certain words of his friend, wherein the author of "Fathers and Sons" sneers at his French *confrère* as "the lowest of my kind." And Daudet, with that wonderful Gallic lightness of touch which hides yet reveals the deep things of the heart, sighs over the disillusionment, and exclaims: "I can see him in my house, at my table, gentle, affectionate, kissing my children. I have in my possession many exquisite, warm-hearted letters from him. And this was what lay concealed beneath that kindly smile. Good heavens! How strange life is, and how true that charming word of the Greek language, *eirôneia*!"

Yet this is the irony of character and circumstance. There is in life one deeper yet and more terrible: the irony of Nature. You feel that the Daudet episode might possibly be straightened out, that "the faith be-



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tween friends " may haply be restored. But the other is different, hopeless. Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest" narrates how a family of cheerful folk sit talking with a guest for the night, in their house far up in the White Mountains, and discourse of human fate and their particular desires. Of a sudden they are interrupted by a sound of awful omen; there is a landslide, and when they realize that destruction is upon them they rush forth from the house to seek a place of safety, only to be buried under the avalanche, one and all. But the house in which they sat escapes scot free. Had they remained about the fire and continued their friendly converse, they would not have perished. Acting for what seemed to be the best, they were ruthlessly exterminated, since the processes of Nature, represented in this case by the landslide, pay no heed to that petty creature, man, and move on their mysterious ways, as if in mockery of his ineptness and ignorance of the fall of events. At such a juncture, a Plato, a Cæsar or a Shakspeare is as helpless as the commonest of the earth.

Here is that irony which, sooner or later, confronts every thoughtful mind and no doubt often shakes the very foundations of faith. And surely it is far sadder than the irony which inheres in character, because it is, or seems, irremediable. Millions of human beings in the world's history have taken steps to the best of their judgment and actuated by the highest motives, only to be precipitated into calamity and to lose their lives in a manner so disastrous as to make the looker-

## The Irony of Nature

on shudder with horror. Nature, magnificently indifferent to the animalcule who for a brief term of time struts and prates upon the earth, conducts her business according to great general laws, utterly refusing to consider the convenience, comfort, or welfare of such an unimportant item in the teeming universe. Often the ironic scene is on a scale of epic grandeur. Not men as individuals, but whole cities go down to death: Pompeii lies buried beneath the lava, San Francisco goes up in smoke, Messina is shaken into ruins.

At first, the spectacle of this cruel unconcern of Nature is of staggering effect; that sometimes it breeds pessimism can well be understood. How, in truth, can this seemingly heartless procedure on the part of Nature — meaning by the word a personification of the laws and processes operative in the physical universe as observed by man — be explained, so that we may return to the soothing thought that not a sparrow falls unnoted, and that, in the forever lovely words of Coleridge,

He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

Of course, all such inquiry can be dismissed on the ground that man is not intended to understand, that his limitations make mystery inevitable, and that faith is thus exercised as it faces the vast and curious antinomies of human life and the course of Nature. If

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we could comprehend all, there were no proper place for that spirit of trust — yea, even though it slay us! — which is the very basis of religion.

Perhaps another thought helps a little when one's mood is darkened by the apparent irony, whether of man or Nature. Why may it not be that all such catastrophic occurrences are but a reminder to us worldlings of the false valuations which are set upon life? Since it is natural for all to die, the manner of going is secondary; and so-called catastrophes are, as a rule, horrible to the observer rather than to the victim, who most often is painlessly and instantly removed from consciousness. But even if we conceded the suffering, it still remains true in a high and holy sense that nothing evil can happen to a good man,— worldly evil, yes, in plenty, but not that evil which is the only true tragedy to the philosopher: spiritual failure. What we call our tragedies are, speaking by and large, merely violent and unexpected interruptions of pleasure. And it is certainly salutary to be reminded, although in a way that is repellent, that one whom physical disaster overcomes can yet sleep with that smile upon his face which is a sign of triumph, and the certificate of a rest well won. The solemn saying of the Greek, "call no man happy until he is dead," was not uttered in cheap cynicism, but had in mind the fact that each day until the end is a chance for the spiritual success or defeat; and that, therefore, we may not claim the victory until all the days be numbered. It may well

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be, therefore, that what is known as the "pathetic fallacy" in literature, the mood of loving trust which makes Wordsworth see beneficent intention in "earth's diurnal course," and sing in his own winsome way,

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good  
Than all the sages can,

— expresses a truth, a spiritual fact, deeper than any process of logic, and more trustworthy than all self-conscious reasoning. Explain it as we will, and whatever be the testimony of the brain, there is, as countless stricken souls are aware, a communion with Nature so sweet and strong and sustaining that it is counted among our most precious experiences, and, once over, laid away in the lavender of memory forever. And when we no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face, it may then become plain that behind the grim look and the chastisement was the benign countenance of the friend, and the unspeakable yearning of the mother heart. Irony, in the last analysis, may resolve itself into a masked good-will.

## Shores of Our Western Sea

**L**ITTLE Mr. Pope in his Twickenham Villa wrote not seldom about grottoes and groves and suchlike denotements of Nature. But you can tell with half an eye that he did not care about them really. There is no love in his treatment of natural beauties: he gives us a purely conventional handling of such material. We must wait until well into the eighteenth century's second half to get the modern note: the note of Gray, when he wrote his letters descriptive of Alpine scenery, the note of Burns and Crabbe and Wordsworth,—the poets who ushered in the splendid new birth of modern romantic poetry, which included the romantic appreciation of sea and shore and sky.

The sea and the inland plains, the rolling wooded country and the lofty hills—these and a thousand other manifestations of the Nature moods which make the outer world a breathing miracle of delight to those whose eyes are awake—came into English literature in our own day as never before. The modern reader can listen to those “twin voices,” as Coleridge calls them, of the sea and mountain, and when he seeks them in vacation time, can receive the double inspiration of their influence; direct, from their physical appearance,



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indirect, from the superb descriptions given to us by the great writers.

How much the Hudson River, for example, owes to Washington Irving! It is a noble stream, in any case, and certainly was when the red man strode along its banks or canoed upon its placid waters. But interwrought with Irving's legendary tales, this river takes on an added loveliness, so that to sail upon it to-day stimulates the fancy as never could have been true before the time of the Knickerbocker author. Similarly, the lake country of England is quite another locality from what it was before Wordsworth and Coleridge and Southey settled there. It is now, and will be for all time to come, clothed in a magic garment of poesy; we see it through a glamorous mist of imagination.

Generally speaking, one goes to the sea or mountains as an alternative. But it is one of the many advantages of the Pacific Coast (where this paper is being penned) that you get the two in close conjunction and in exciting contrast. Westward, is the ever-changing ocean; to the east the foothills, and further in the background the sheer purple peaks, snow-topped, remote, inaccessible, virginal; while between, the landscape smiles with orchards and orange groves; and the chromatic variations of gold and green, of white and purple and brown, of scarlet and lavender and gray, are such as almost to intoxicate a person whose color-sense has been half-starved in other, less-favored regions.

There are three effects of Nature alike, in that they

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are all grandiose, and on an impressive scale: those furnished by the ocean, the plain, and the mountain. Naturally, they have evoked corresponding expression in letters, as where Byron invokes the sea, "Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll," or Coleridge chants of Chamouni, or our own Whitman cries up the great reaches of the Far West. Personal preferences will, of course, give the palm to one or the other of these mighty exhibitions of Nature's grandeur. But perhaps all will agree that there is more of the steadfast implied in plain and mountain, while the infinite charm and lure of the sea are due in large measure to the protean habit of change.

To be sure, on the shores of the western sea, it is the mood and aspect of calm that seems dominant; the Pacific, true to her name, laps the sands in caressing susurris day after day and storms are remote dreams rather than dire realities. Yet we know that this wilderness of water can arouse herself and smite and slay and then easily resume her deceitful semblance of languorous rest.

The Pacific is the more satisfying to the imagination in that she is, compared with the traffic-dense Atlantic, bare of sails and so less obstructed in the great horizon-sweeps that allow man to use the sea as a type of the Infinite. Lonesome, majestic, untampered with by puny man, the Pacific is the sea, par excellence, to express the feeling of solitude and self-communion. Of course, this is appearance rather than fact, for "ten

## Shores of Our Western Sea

thousand ships sweep over thee in vain," but the imagination lives in and thrives by appearances, so that my words are true.

Then by their proximity, the hills are all the more effective! Meditating by the waters, with your face turned to the west, the fancy broods on the mystery of life, your own small life in relation to the teeming life of fellow-man, going forth as it does upon the mighty waves to seek some haven beyond the sky-line. The solitary gazer associates himself with his kind. Amid the mountains, however, while the mood again is one of communion, it is very different; there is less of quiescence and revery in it, more of the tonic of summons and action. And clearly it is more individualistic. To look up to the high hills, the Psalmist knew when he added, "Whence cometh my help," is to feel one's smallness, yet to get a kind of pleasure in that sense of personal insignificance; to know God better as humanity shrinks to its true proportions.

Yet once more, between the remote Sierras and the sea stretches the desert, vast, yellow, rapacious, and deadly hot. Not on the whole round earth is there a more striking illustration of the magic wrought by water than in the way the once arid coast of California, rainless and without irrigation, has been made to smile like a second Eden by the hand of man, which has so used this precious element as to make a very bower of fruits and flowers where once was the silence of desolation and the plummet of emptiness. Really, there is





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here the theme for an epic poem. But now that the miracle has been accomplished, there is still the fascination of the arid yellow inland landscape, the wide summer sweep of California plains which, wanting rain, glow like some huge topaz and offer a vivid foil to the sumptuous green of the lands under cultivation. Winter tourists on the western coast miss this color note so beloved of painters, which gives to the color-scheme such a distinctive value.

The sea, the plain, and the mountain,—go to California to enjoy them and get the triune influence of their presence. In the course of time, the incomparable beauties of Nature in this far-flung barrier to the western sea will get full expression from the native makers of literature even as already much has come from Twain and Stoddard and Harte, from Miller and Norris and London, from Lummis and Muir and Sterling, and from many more of the younger American school. Here is a magnificent motif, still fresh and provocative: men must limn these wonders between sky and sod, between brine and blue. What a poor, impoverished thing were our literature, indeed, did not her annals increasingly record the inspiration of woods and waters, and hills and plains and prairies, upon the sensitive spirit of man.

## Again the Golden Weather

**I**F it were our first experience of it, would it be more or less beautiful? one wonders on these golden days of October. If the marvel of them were a surprise instead of a treasured memory, would our joy be diminished or increased? Perhaps the mingling of expectation and fresh delight is what gives the October mood its richest quality. We knew it would come, since it always has, yet we were not quite prepared for the mellow perfection of its look, the too-soon-departed splendor of its spangled hours. To know autumn at its best is to feel that, once at least in life, anticipation is no cheat, for realization even beggars our dream of the truth.

Nor is it static loveliness. Little by little, as day follows day, there is an added keenness in the air, a winy, crisp flavor to one's very breathing; the yellows become more dominant, the reds creep in to make the chromatic gamut more variegated, and, so gradually that you hardly observe it, the subtle browns and grays and sober bronzes temper the higher coloring and lead on to that ineffable spiritual quality that makes November, to the perceptive soul, the most suggestive month of the year. Melancholy grows with the

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change, yes; but it is rather the memory of sorrow than sorrow itself; or, better, it is the sad that is so sweet as to pluck the sting from grief, and substitute for the inertia of loss great brooding thoughts of peace and of fruition.

Autumn musings are thus reminiscent yet fore-looking. It is as though Nature, her active summer work done, sits for a pleasure-while, recalls her harvestings, and is satisfied; and then, facing the winter and its dearth, half-weary but content, aware that with the spring her power shall be renewed by an ancient pact of earth and sky, smiles dreamily and, not unhappy, falls on sleep.

Just now as I write, the green and gold contend in rivalry for the landscape. My window, which gives on a southern prospect, shows me many an interweaving of these two superb color notes; and the heavens above, soft yet keen, glitteringly ashine, and sure, as evening approaches, to paint the west with luminous miracles of yellow and red and pink and the intermediate tints that are opaline and pearl-shot and dimmest amethyst, recall Wordsworth's great lines:

Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

It seems almost cruel that October is but a brief fraction of the cycle of the months. But would it be so dear and wonderful were it a more frequent visitant?

## Again the Golden Weather

After all, there is wisdom in the alternation of the seasons, and man, left to his own devices, might cheapen the benisons of nature by demanding them at will.

How deep and wholesome the lesson October teaches in her willingness to relax, and recall, to brood and lie fallow for a little, ere the work is resumed. We fussy mortals, with our large-little schemes, our nervous hurrys and incoherent hastes, need this admonition of the fields and forests in their autumn semblance. The temptation always to work, to strive for something desirable even in the well-earned vacationing, is a universal one, and nowhere stronger than in busy, anxious, emulative America. And rebuking such undue, undignified worry, the eternal processes of the earth offer us a sight of their unhasting sequences, and, in a sumptuous mood of beauty, remind us that to be happy is to be well nourished, as Emerson somewhere says; that just to lie fallow, and dream, may be to do the work of the gods.





## Man and Society

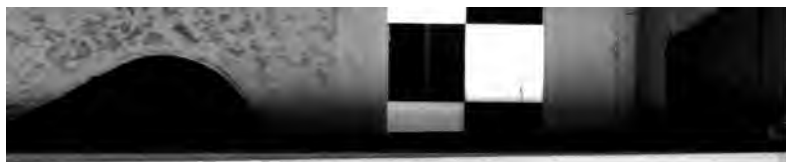


## A Five-Year-Old

**T**HE oldest person I know, and the sweetest, is a five-year-old maid. When she looks at me out of those deep, candid eyes of hers, and rebukes with a grave wonder some utterly foolish remark I have made under the prick of social necessity, it is I who feel only five, while she seems, as to wisdom, of an age ineffable and beyond compute.

It has always seemed to me that there is something very eerie about children in their knowingness; they appear to speak out of a supreme contempt for the evasions and shallownesses of grown-ups. It is as if the accumulated experience of the race were stored up in them, and they held the touchstone which infallibly separates the wheat from the chaff in human character. Hence the exceeding silliness of "talking down" to a little one who looks up to you in the physical sense, since you are the taller; but who looks down on you and patronizes you from a height of spiritual superiority that is beyond plummet-line, measure, or mark. The mature person who is at all perceptive, and has not forgotten his own childhood altogether, thus comes to stand in very awe of a sweet, winsome wisp of a girl such as my five-year-old.





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Do not misunderstand me. It is not moral only, this influence of a child, but intellectual; or, at least, it involves more than being better than I am.

I stood one day, well along toward sunset, in the bay window, watching the western sky where the Maker of all things was marshaling a splendid array of colors for the final sun-flight.

"It is beautiful, isn't it, dear?" said I, with a banality for which I immediately hated myself.

"Yes," replied my five-year-old, with infinite sober sweetness.

Then with a masterstroke of the commonplace, I added, half to myself, "I wonder what it all means?" Whereupon, those eyes were turned full upon me, and as I shrank from their compassionate pity, came the words: "Why, don't you know?" In a flash I stood confessed, stripped bare, in all my wretched grown-upness; a creature staled by custom,—so many sunsets had I seen!—ashamed to let my intuitions divine the truth, set in the vicious habit of trying to prove instead of feeling the truth and being nourished by thoughts that "do often lie too deep for tears."

When she had taught me a salutary lesson, my five-year-old turned, still with the same indescribable sweet dignity, walked to a table, took up a book and became immersed in the best literature in the world,—fairy tales. It was exactly as if she had said—only a nicer way of saying it—"Now I think you understand; excuse me, I have more important matters than your

## **A Five-Year-Old**

education to attend to." It would have been a colossal mistake had I made any reply; I simply sneaked out of the room, closing the door very softly for fear of breaking the reverie of the sedate little figure, with that "spirit small hand" of hers propping up the fair white brow and the stray locks of burnished hair falling over the mobile face.

No wonder scientists tell us that the child is the race writ small, for children certainly have the effect of knowing far more than any one child can, so far as instruction and the experience drawn from their brief sojourn in the earthly environment go. This may lead in the direction of mysticism, but I care not whither it lead, since, to judge from personal observation, it is the honest impression made upon us by the wee inhabitants of our hearts and homes. They remind me constantly that the grown-up tendency is to play a part; in contrast, they seem rooted in reality. It is only their good breeding which keeps them from openly contemning our foolish assumption of rôles, the hangdog manner in which we disport ourselves most of the time. When a mature human being lets go for a bit, waxes natural and dares to be himself, he is sure to be checked by the fatal remark from another sophisticate: "Dear me, don't do that, you act as if you were only ten," after which cold douche you sheepishly resume your solemn customary mask, and go cursing on your way. During that brief, beautiful, dare-devil moment of letting go, you may be despised by fool grown-ups, but the



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children love you, recognize you for the nonce as their equal; and will give you such a royal time of it as shall make the return to mature inhibitions painful indeed.

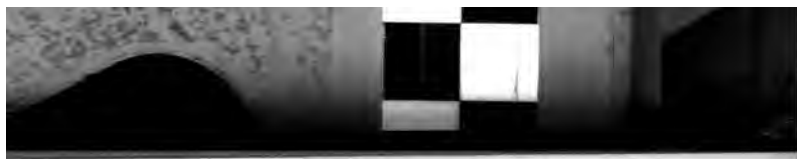
Remember, I am speaking of the unspoiled child. Double the years of my beloved five-year-old, and when she has attained the reverend age of ten she will begin to obey imitatively, and as an end to some desired result. She will not have her queenlike way of granting a favor. She will have entered into more intimate relations with others and have lost somewhat of that distinctive, fascinating personality which at present gives her both power and charm. In short, she will be further along the road that leads to maturity: time of consciousness, convention, and caution.

I never got really close to my five-year-old until I treated her as my equal in general knowledge, and immensely my superior in everything else. This once conceded, we were instantly on comrade terms and what I had the audacity to call my "business" was merely a pretext to keep me busy during the day, while she, too, had her tasks and duties until, evening come, the all too brief hour before bed could be devoted to the truly important part of life: games, stories, conversations, the exchange of experiences and the exercise of the imagination. Here I must drop aside all weariness and, with every faculty alert and my best foot forward, engage in a companionship inexhaustibly varied, fresh, delightful, and instructive. Often I went into it like a clod, and came out a living spirit. My fancy had been dead, it

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was alive again; my sense of romance and poetry had slumbered, and once more it was quickened into joyous activity. I rejoiced to be alive, believed in myself and my fellow-beings, knew that the undying boy was still in me waiting for the call; and above and beyond everything else realized the wonder and the witchery of maidenhood whose years are few by earthly telling, but whose winsome lore is big with reverberations from the stored-up wisdom of all past time. I listen to the sweet treble of my five-year-old's laughter, yet almost tremble at something behind it that takes hold on the infinite, and hints of secrets not revealed to man.

Think not that this child is exceptional. Nay, she is not mine at all, nor do I gaze upon her with the fond, too favorable eye of parental possession. All childhood, looked at aright, has this higher meaning, this mysterious gift of presence and prescience, this magic of suggestion and intuition. While we "teach" it — in our boastful grown-up speech — we may let it teach us too, nor be afraid to sit at the feet of babes and sucklings.



## My Friend and I

**I** HAD lost my friend, and I went my ways, dazed and dry-eyed, trying to forget, always remembering. I repeated to myself, for the comfort of their beauty, Cory's wonderful lines, in which the poet spoke once and for all, for all of us, voicing the wistful pathos of the loss and lonesomeness which are a part of human destiny:

They told me, Heracleitus, they told me you were dead,  
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.  
I wept, as I remembered how often you and I  
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

Then one day I found myself in a great wood, gloomed by splendid firs, yet gold-shot by shafts of sun that pierced transversely the scented forest aisles, making an alluring arabesque of light-and-shade before my tardy feet. And lo, as I walked on in meditation so deep and sad and tender as to be unaware of bodily motion, of a sudden there floated to me, from I know not what æry hidden perch in the tree tops, the note of the hermit thrush,—sole singer of spiritual secrets, I like to call him, of all the tuneful choir of our western world. Instantly, with an electric insistence, the

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second and concluding stanza of Cory's poem flooded into my mind:

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,  
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,  
Still are they pleasant voices, thy nightingales awake;  
For Death he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

What matter whether it be thrush or nightingale, I thought then, the one loved here in America, the other dear across the great water, and bound up with the song and story of many centuries? For with both, Nature speaks through the mouth of a bird, and man listens and receives consolation. There, in the scented wood way, walking upon the soft, springy carpet of pine-needles, and catching glimpses of the summer sky far above, while my lungs drew in the balsam-laden air and the sough of the wind made a subtle music in my ear, I knew, with a knowledge not of the head but of the heart, that my friend was near, and held converse with me after the sweet old fashion. And not all the scornful wisdom of the world shall ever deprive me of that moment of revelation and of bliss.

Nor was that sylvan drawing-nigh to the friend unique; for I found that if I sought, I also found; that some lovely Nature-note or mood was always ready and eager to act as intermediary between me and the one behind the veil. On earth, we had together loved these rare, divine moments when the beauties of earth and sky and all that lies between seized upon our souls and made them one in a noble experience. And so now,



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if but the moment offered and the mood came, came also the comrade as of yore, and we walked and talked together as if the "unplumbed, salt, estranging sea" which men call death had never rolled between and seemingly sundered our lives. By a marvelous identification of interest, by a happiness so keen that it had to be shared, time and space and the testimony of the eye were not, and only the love that binds human beings together remained.

That day in the wood, when I came to a little clump of white birches, most *spirituelle* of all forest trees, even as the firs and hemlocks are the most somber and the poplars most quiveringly pathetic, it seemed as if my friend paused and spoke of those elvish creatures; for did he not care for them in special, and had he not written many a lilting line that limned their slender, white perfection and hinted at the symbol of their haunting presence? And so, side by side, in the hidden healing of the woods, we stood, and looked, communed and were content.

The season was midsummer, that would soon merge into early autumn. Hence, the rich green leaves of the laurel, that in June embowered the fragrant blossoms along this enchanted road, were alone a witness to earlier flowering; but all who know the laurel along New England roadways can love its leaves when blossoming is over, and so did we, there in the scented dusk, — for now the night drew on. My friend, dear though dead, alive because loved, stooped to pluck a bit

## My Friend and I

of goldenrod, and held it up high in his grasp against the trees; green behind gold, gold against green; with his exquisite color-sense, I knew how much the picture meant to him, albeit no word dropped from his lips.

A little later, as we strolled on down the aisles of early evening, and began to see through the pleached tree tops the pale silver of a sickle moon, he paused again to brood tenderly over the wild aster, whose delicate purple was another color-note in a place where the sensitive might feast upon many such a detail. And I saw, not without tears, how the poet soul of my friend spoke to that beautiful wilding thing, and how it gave him back its blessing and its peace. To both of us, unspeakable memories were interwoven with these common wayside blooms, the goldenrod and the aster; overtones out of the past they sounded, and undermeanings they held, too deep to fathom.

Still we walked on, and the dusk trembled with the reiterant triple note of the thrush; so shy and hid and minor-cadenced is that songster, that sundown and afterglow and the first dovelike revealings of the night are the hours to hear him; these, rather than any daytime mood. And as the bird's silver, delayed music mourned through the forest and seemed like a harbinger of the promised floodtide of moonlight, lo, my friend, with his low, sweet voice, his aquiline beauty, and his spirit too fine for the harsh uses of this world, faded out from my ken and, for that time, came no more.

But, moving down the silvern vistas of the wood, his



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touch was still warm upon my hand, his love sustained me, and in the continued plaint of the hermit thrush I felt his presence and was less bereaved. And I was aware that this was no fantasy, but a sane excursion of the soul, fortifying me for the more homely doings that fill my days.

Returning from the vacation, recalling what has been seen and done, it is natural and perhaps not unfruitful to think these autumn thoughts, and to wonder if in the contact once again with Nature in our leisure time, we have drawn nearer to the mother breast and made the most of a golden chance, so becoming revived for the sober working-year. For there, in the breathing universe of which the sky and earth are like twin walls, there is a comradeship indeed, and a solace that no shift of fortune or of fate can take away. My friend and I were brought together by that voice, the voice for us that sounded through the thrush, the voice typified in Cory's nightingales:

For Death he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

## Out of Childhood

THE man herewith recalls a sensational event out of his childhood. His father returned from a trip to Florida, bearing with him a mysterious, small white box, long for its size and perforated with air holes. Arriving in the early morning, he came into the room where the boy was dressing, unscrewed the top of the box, and emptied onto the floor a live baby alligator.

The little beast, after a dazed moment or two, began to crawl, and the boy took to the nearest chair with an instinctive movement that had in it no apparent reasoning: just the immediate, spontaneous physical reaction to fear and astonishment behind which doubtless are occult manœuvres of the brain. Trusting to memory, the man would say that the tiny saurian, thus abruptly introduced into the early ménage, was perhaps three feet in length; more likely he was but two; alligators, like other things, grow with the years and the telling. But he was big enough to afford a thrill such as sets that day apart in the corridors of memory and makes it worth while yet to re-live it, for its romance and its poetry. That alligator (I regret to add that it pined away in the bleak northerly air



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and died just three weeks after its Floridian hegira) stood for the far away, the unusual, the unexpected, the imagined but never before seen; all denotements to arouse, in boy or man, the sentiment that makes him tingle with a sense of the wonder of life.

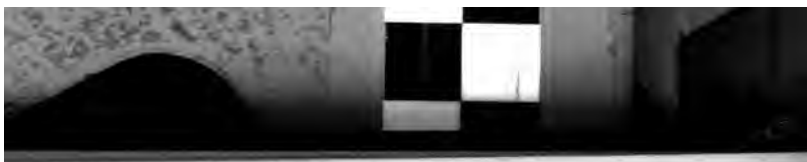
The wonder of life, there you are! Does it still evoke that feeling in you, at least now and again? If not, beware, and deceive yourself not: you may be but five and thirty, with a clean bill of health from the medical authorities, yet you are to all intents and purposes dead, yes, deader than old Marley, than whom was ever a man more definitely extinct? If to you the laws of nature have become a commonplace, and the characters of your fellow-men uninteresting; if there be no longer a stir of the imagination as you look back to your alligator (or whatever the event you summon out of your youth); if history seem to you but dry bones, and the turmoil and passion of that present history, which is politics, is naught but a sordid game of personal ambition; if the marvels of science shake you not as mortals burrow the earth, penetrate the sea or sail upon the great winds a mile high in the air; if (and this is inconceivable) there is no vibrancy and sweetness for you in the voice of woman heard in the moonlight under the ancient enchantment of glooming trees; if a land of the present like America fail to make you dream of a future so mighty in achievements as to beggar speech and almost baffle prophecy, —then, poor soul, are you but a galley slave, when a

## Out of Childhood

king you might be, and no mortal of them all lying in dreamless dust in a dateless and forgotten tomb is so wretchedly null and void as you! For with them, they had the chance and mayhap took it, and it is long over. But for you, with the chance within reach, and with your blood still coursing in your veins, you see nothing around or above or within you, and are merely marking time instead of marching with the great, eternal procession of the years and the nations.

Lucky the mortal who has had an alligator in his youth and remembers it. Lucky any one who, beaten upon by the cares of life and at times haggard with its responsibilities, can still take joy in a sunset, go a-fishing for the sake of the outdooriness of it as well as for the fish, follow the "National Game" without shame, laugh at a clean joke from the lungs instead of from the throat,—in short, one who has preserved a capacity for the zest of living and can command upon a fit occasion the boy-like mood. Kill the instinct for joy in a mature human being and what is left is a drudge, a bore or a criminal. Remove the sense of poetry from him, as in a hundred ways it applies to life, and he is like a traveler who, midway upon the burning, waterless desert sands, has not even the hope of the green oasis and the blessed drink beneath the pleasant shade trees far away. He has around him only the hopeless barrenness of the desert.

Man is a creature of bread and meat and daily duties, yes; but also a creature of dreams, ideals, of



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spangled memories and immortal forth-looking faith. He was meant to work in the gladness of his heart no less than in the sweat of his brow. If he do not, his doom is not in the intention of the Almighty but in the mistakes of society.

## Loafing

**K**ENNETH GRAHAME, essayist of charm and suggestion, speaks of "all good fellows who look upon holidays as a chief end of life," and adds that, "wisest of them all, the Loafer stands apart, supreme." You observe that he dignifies him with a capital, as if in protest at the cheap, conventional estimate of the type, an opprobrious name withal, to fit a drone or blackguard. For Grahame, however, the loafer is wise because he realizes that reflection yields a richer, more lasting joy than action; that, in sooth, the latter is but a preparation for the "subjective pleasures of the mind." And the true loafer is possessed of such a whimsical turn of mind, and so well dowered with humor, as to derive the more zest from the opinion of him cherished by the Philistine, who looks upon the other as a cumberer of the earth, an economic failure, to be hounded into jails and workhouses, and a theme for admonition and warning.

The loafer we have in mind — the loafer whom Grahame sings — is no tramp, nor wastrel, nor yet a man who dodges duty. No, he is a sane soul who works hard, yet leaves a margin for play, and in his play is sportively a boy again; he knows that, so far from wast-



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ing time, he is renewing his whole life and that in the very relaxation lies the strength to key up once more for the more active business of life. The Stradivarius which is never unstrung — so runs his thought — will lose its incomparable tone. He knows, too, that in his apparent idleness and aimless lounging may be hidden processes of assimilation and absorption, precious indeed for his highest welfare, his finest usefulness for fellow-men. He has learned the secret phrased by Horace centuries ago, that it is wise to fool in season.

Robert Louis Stevenson, than whom no man of his generation worked more valiantly against greater odds, wrote one day toward the end of his life thus whimsically to a friend: "I sometimes sit and yearn for anything in the nature of an income that would come in — mine has all got to be gone and fished for with the immortal mind of man. What I want is the income that really comes in of itself, while all you have to do is just to blossom and exist and sit on chairs." And he goes on to say that, under such conditions, "I should probably amuse myself with works that would make your hair curl,— if you had any left."

Here we get close to the truth. In an ideal state, work would not be for wage, but for the spontaneous and pleasurable expression of personality. And it is safe to say that the bulk of the world's best work has been done in that spirit. Dr. Grenfell tells us that there is no sacrifice in his bleak, splendid Labrador service; he is simply having a good time, doing what he

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best likes to do; and all the more we honor the service which he renders, and admire the man.

The only real loafer, then, is the man who, because he can work hard as well, can appreciate the loafing; and who recognizes, in the seeming laziness, the filling of an empty well with the waters of life. The hobo is no genuine loafer, for the sufficient reason that he works hard at it, and has lost the taste of pleasure it should contain. Hence do we regard him with oblique gaze, as an enemy of society. Why should we honor any man who, having elected a profession, finds no reward in it? If, passing along a country road, I should come upon a group of tramps sitting about a fire at their ease and singing some rollicking stave, I would feel a certain respect for them; it would be a symbol of joy in the hardest job on earth,—doing nothing as a profession. But did any one ever hear such a song?

Walt Whitman, in famous words, has extolled the virtue of loafing and inviting our souls. His meaning goes deep into the roots of living. Here is the true-blue, culminating validation of that mood which, to the outer eye a mere indulgence in inertia, may be to that inner eye which sees the soul of things, the most important functioning of a life. Truly, we need that hour, day, week, or year; not for rest, refreshment, recreation alone, good as they are, but to take stock of ourselves spiritually, to get on speaking terms with our higher selves, to realize that we are made in the image of God. The mood of seeming idleness invites





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the soul, because for the nonce we drive from mind the practical business which commonly holds us in an iron grip, and makes reflection, readjustment, and new valuations impossible; into the mind, thus clarified, and so made hospitably open for better things, flow the sweet and potent influences of the spirit.

There is your loafer, sublimated and so justified. Away with the shallow definition of the dictionary! Wise is he who preserves the spirit of loafing as an avocation, even as he is foolish who makes it a vocation. Emerson, in this sense, was one of the superb loafers of American life and letters. He walked the Concord woods or beside her streams with his mind inward bent, in that delightful mood which, as Wordsworth has it, "is the bliss of solitude." I daresay, to the inhabitants of the town he sometimes looked idle, a sort of high-class vagrant. But he was ever about his own business, and it was a very important one, as we now regard it and him. He dared to loaf and let in supernal visitors; he was sensitive to the call not of earth; and so he hitched his wagon to a star.

In overactive America, we are prone to wax apologetic for any "time out." We must remember that time out may be eternity in. We must have the courage of our convictions and when we know that the clock has struck and the loafing hour is fairly come, not be shamed from using it by mere outward appearance, that tyrant over us all. "I have worked," the wise one should reply, "long and dutifully, in order that this



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hard-won sacred hour might be granted me; it is here, and I shall use it to my best advantage, benignantly unconcerned, even if, to my neighbor, I seem to misuse an opportunity." And he, on his side, should adopt the principle of 'live and let live'; he needs the charitable interpretation, even as do you. Avaunt the thought that the idle man, as we call him, is one who works not when the harvest is ripe; perchance he gleans in fields as fruitful as was that of Boaz to the alien Ruth. It may well be that, at the very moment when his vacant eye seems to be fixed on nothing, he is seeing visions that in the fullness of time shall save a nation. See that you have vision, lest the people perish.

Long live the loafer who does not abuse his privilege, nor invite other than lofty company into the secret places of his soul! His is the authentic activity that is more than muscular, and his reward is richer than can be computed in any coin of the realm.

## Old Age

**T**HE tragedy of growing old is that you feel so young. Many a middle-aged person has become amazingly aware of this. To say that a man is as old as he feels and a woman as she looks, is not to get quite to the root of the matter. If a man carries his years in his face, the community credits him with them, however much he may skip about and ape inimitable youth. And as for the other sex, to declare that appearance settles the matter opens the door to the temptation of assisting nature with art, hiding maturity behind make-up. Psychologically, both sexes are on a par as to age. Whether man or woman, if the spirit of youth be within, its outward expression in face and form will follow, and joyously set back the clock of Time.

The deadly thing, almost more aging than age itself, is the insidious, creeping knowledge that the months fly, the years move on apace, and all of us, willynilly, are older by every ticktock of the clock and revolution of the seasons. To brood upon it is to wax morbid, perhaps pessimistic. I am tempted to say that what we call old age is thus a biologic condition plus a state of mind. In other words, self-consciousness plays a

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definite part in bringing about "this drooping gait, this altered size," as Coleridge has it, and "this body that does me grievous wrong" has been influenced by the bodeful dwelling upon its slow, sad, inevitable approach. I believe, therefore, that it would be a mighty good thing if we did not tell off our age by months and years at all, and kept no track of the passage of time, so far as we are personally concerned. It is the attitude of the community which develops in us this sickly tally-keeping, whereby we are aware that to-day we are forty or fifty or, alas, sixty years of age!

Suppose, by the common consent of men, a certain terminal of year-counting were set up: say, thirty-five. Thereafter, we, the community, agree to count our ages backward: being thirty-four at thirty-six, and so following. At forty-five, you will observe, we should be twenty-five, positively coltish in feeling and no doubt in appearance, for the psychological effect of this thoroughly rational arrangement would be tremendous. This plan would be an improvement, I take it, even upon the state of mind induced by not knowing your age at all, a condition sometimes seen in the persons of very old colored folk, who have lost the count long since, and who — notice — are invariably a hundred or so years old. But the plan proposed is better still, because we are not only holding Time back, but we are actually growing younger all the while.

Do not be so foolish as to call this idea whimsical;

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it is a fine example of the higher commonsense, and I am proud of it. Remember that the new thing is not necessarily idiotic; by the new thing the world advances. Any mind that is open wider than a mouse-trap can grasp the fact that we are all victims, more or less, of the social conscience and consciousness, meekly walking our ways in accordance with their tyrannous decrees. Surely, in nothing is this truer than in the absurd and hideous conventions of age.

What woman dare face her dressmaker when the latter remarks, "I think that would be a little young for you?" Or what man, forsooth,—although man pretends to be indifferent to such fussy distinctions,—will not hesitate when the salesman declares oracularly, "Yes, it is a nice piece of goods, but really, you know, that garment belongs in the boys' department." It may be the best fitting and most becoming thing in the place, but you humbly turn away and take some ugly pattern suitable to your calendar record. Ah, me, many are the varieties of slavery here on earth!

Even as society is now constituted there are alleviations not a few. Science and civilization have so prolonged man's age that we all average longer lives than we did some centuries ago, and some of us live longer than we want to. Moreover, besides living longer in actual enumeration of time, we keep younger while living,—“are in it,” as the saying is, far beyond the conventional limits set up by earlier killjoys. Men like Gladstone and Lord Kelvin were doing work of im-

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mense value to the world when past eighty; the Psalmist's allotment of years, being seventy, is laughed to scorn, and a man like Dr. Holmes was hailed by all who knew him as eighty years young.

Women, who by the old dispensation were dead and done for by thirty, are mere social infants now at that age; Balzac discovered the social possibilities of the woman of thirty, a new type in his hands. Within personal observation, the woman of forty has been accepted in literature — sure mirror of social thought and feeling — and it is common enough in drama and fiction to see that mature age made attractive and entirely congruous in the depiction of love between the sexes.

In Parker's charming play, "Rosemary," a man of forty in love with a girl in her teens is the hero, and all the sympathy of the audience is his. Nay, a much more striking example of the way we are pushing forward the age-limit, whether for love or work, is to be found in Bernstein's play, "The Attack," wherein a man of fifty-three is loved and proposed to by a very young girl. A generation ago, this situation could only have been regarded as humorous; now it occurs in a piece of serious import. There is a widespread sentiment to-day expressed in the line of the darky song: "I'se goin' to live, anyhow, till I die, die, die."

It is realized that the fundamental technic of living is in learning to make the most of the present gift of earth life, and to last in it as long as you can, as young as you can, with most enjoyment to yourself and most

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usefulness to others. A this-world commonsense has been developed under the *régime* of science. Gradually, but with evidently increasing courage, we are refusing to be killed before our time, or to be set aside ere our usefulness or attraction is over, or to be intimidated into a state of up-stage retirement when the pulses still beat strong and Life beckons yet with infinite sweet promises. We have rebelled against so mechanical a thing as the stroke of the hour or a mere word registered in the family Bible. We resent the impudent questions asked by all sorts of people, whose business seems to offer an excuse, with regard to our length of years. After all, it is our business, not theirs, and if we will only believe it, the matter lies in our own hands.

"Avaunt, all such harpies," I cry. "It is nobody's affair how old I am, and if you wish to estimate my time of life, watch my actions, observe my many activities of body and mind, and so judge."

Let us all adopt the pleasant advice: "The moment you feel too old to do a thing, do it at once."

## The Lure of Happiness

**H**APPINESS is the bluebird which ever lures man on, elusive, escaping, always beyond his grasp. Joy, content, pleasure, these are his as a mood or a moment, again and again during his human experience. But happiness, which means a permanent condition or state, is not his, nor intended to be. When he finds the good or the beautiful dear and desirable, it is because he recognizes it as fleeting, a thing that beckons him onward, a lure toward perfection, not of earth, or at least not at present on earth. Thus beauty, of whatever kind, is a promise of happiness and holiness; not a state to be completely realized, but a splendid ideal to be striven for, with the hope of a final destination where only the holy shall abide.

Our forefathers had a sense of this when, in framing the United States Constitution, they named "Life, Liberty and the *pursuit* of Happiness" as the triple aim of man, government being the machinery to assist him in the attainment of these privileges. It was the pursuit, not the acquirement, of happiness which was set up as an end: an end in itself, since that will-o'-the-wisp is never quite caught.

Stevenson, in a letter to a friend, declared that he



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had known many a delight, that joy had often been his,—he learned the great lesson, too, that “the spirit of delight comes on small wings,”—yet he affirmed he had never grasped happiness. These are significant words, coming from a man who, conspicuous in his generation, loved life, enjoyed it to the full and in all his writings cried up the idea that it was richly worth while. His remark, therefore, was not pessimistic or cynical, although superficially it might be taken as the expression of disillusionment. It was rather his philosophic reminder that life was so constituted, and happiness, in the scheme of things, a desideratum, a dream, never a mere *fait accompli*.

There are two ways of receiving this fact: we may challenge the ordering of the universe, call it arbitrary and cruel; or assume that there is a salutary meaning in it all, and hence seek for the answer. Those with voice and vision have inclined to the latter mind. Maeterlinck, in the charming play of child-life and fairy lore which has been giving pleasure to so many folk throughout this country, is one such interpreter. He recognizes the elusive character of the pursuit of happiness, along with the universality of the attempt; the children, lad and lassie, who for a dream-year seek the bird that is blue (until caught), stand for the human race; we are all like that, whatever be our particular conception of happiness. Again and again do the children reach out their hands to take the bird, but ever it eludes. Cage it and it escapes, or, looked

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at the second time, begins to fade from its cerulean hue to one more dull and drablike.

When the dream is over, and the children under the kindly guidance of Light, who is vision, are returned to their humble home, lo! the poet-dramatist would say to us that the bird of happiness is there, was there all the time in those familiar and homely surroundings; overlooked, it may be, because we fondly imagined that a thing so supernal and fair could not be near at hand, a matter of everyday experience. Of deep significance in the treatment is it, that when Tyltyl gives his pet dove to the sick child of a neighbor,—in other words, does a deed of loving-kindness,—his dove turns blue and seems to be the very bird they have so long sought. Yet he escapes by an accident, and in truth must; for, otherwise, the allegory were not consistent. It would be a false teaching of life if that desirable, yearned-for bird should pause for long in its flight, were more than momentarily retained.

Here, it would seem, we get the clue to the secret. Happiness, a desire of the eyes, a dream of the soul, is placed before us in order that, by the slow process of living, we may learn to distinguish between the joy that is fleeting and of the flesh, and that which is permanent, high and pure. Life, with this in mind, may be defined as a series of discoveries and rejections: the rejection of second-class happinesses, and the discovery of the higher happiness which alone satisfies and abides. That supreme joy is seen by the artist as Beauty, and so he hails

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it; by the religionist as the Good, and he bows down before it in worship; and by the philosopher as the Eternal Truth, and austere he holds it before men as the one perfect and holy thing. But in the guise of happiness each member of this trinity must come, and to the thinker they are but phases of the one indivisible principle.

Happiness, then, is made a winged and wandering creature to lure us on in an everlasting chase for perfection. It is the great stimulant of ideals, for the reason that it suggests in a world so broken, imperfect, and unsatisfactory, another state, or condition, wherein the gleam becomes steady daylight and the ineffable promise a realized possession. A man without ideals is, in the deepest sense, dead. Happiness is used as a lure,—first a mere bauble of pleasure; then, gradually it changes until it becomes the bright particular jewel of our souls which shall take our attention away from the gauds and jimcracks of earth and set our contemplation upon the things of the spirit. Happiness and the undying hope it breeds find their justification here.

What a comforting light this truth sheds upon a myriad of the pathetic scenes of earth! The love, set upon the friend who must be lost, is translated to a higher love which, without the long training, could not have been. The frustrate plan, so dear to the imagination, so desired, so worked for through years so long, has left in the soul the priceless treasure of character and conduct; it needed the plan to bring it to



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a rounded strength. The sad revelation of treachery in the trusted mate only directs the mind to a state where there shall be no shadow of turning. The many bitternesses that come because the cherished wish lies stillborn before us, are seen to be, in the homely phrase, but blessings in disguise in the course of the years: if unworthy, they are well forgotten; if worthy, we witness their translation into a higher ideal.

It is one of the many merits of a piece of literature like Maeterlinck's "The Blue Bird" that these deep truths of life are implicit in the story, and that the philosopher is behind the poet, teaching us while he gives us innocent pleasure by music, stage spectacle, and the joy of contact with the simple things of youth and the magic things of the young imagination. Such a play is indeed a welcome visitant to any city, for it leaves an influence, pervasive and strong, though not tangibly appreciable, long after the beautiful fairy fantasy may have faded from our memory.



## As Others See Us

**N**OBODY ever sees his own face in the glass. What he observes there is a compound, divided into three parts: one part himself as he really is, one part representing what he expects to see, and a third part what he wishes to behold. Self-esteem gets between us and the truth in suchwise as to blind us forever to the facts. Did you ever have the awful experience of walking into a full-length mirror, on the assumption that it was a vista and the disagreeable-looking person coming towards you another than yourself? As he approaches, you size him up with the cool, aloof glance which you direct upon strangers in general; on the whole, you do not at all like his deportment, gait, or general semblance. Suddenly, with a genuine shock, having arrived close to the all-revealing yet deceptive glass, you discover the ill-favored stranger to be yourself,—and it takes you weeks to get over it. For the nonce, you really have seen yourself as others see you. And you mutter, “Never again!”

Dr. Holmes in “The Autocrat” tells us there are six personalities involved in a dialogue between John and Thomas: the real John, known only to his Maker;

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John's ideal John, and Thomas' ideal John, who is never the real John; and the same three with reference to Thomas. This, it will be observed, makes any conversation betwixt two human beings a pretty complex affair; it gives one a sobering sense of the subtle difficulty of understanding each other and the futility of making trustworthy estimates of our fellow-mortals.

For, notice that on top of the mistakes inevitably made by John about Thomas and by Thomas about John must be piled the blunders the community will make regarding both, not only as a community, but as countless judgments of the individuals which make up society. The mind fairly staggers before the mathematics suggested by the mere statement of these reactions and interactions. Add to this the element of time, because opinions shift with time's passing, and the inconstancy of human estimates becomes all the more impressive. If it is practically impossible for a human being to know himself because of the blinding of selfhood, and still more impossible to know others who are contemporary, what likelihood is there of any accuracy in the attempts to depict characters in the past?

This is where a certain skepticism concerning historical estimates is bred in one who realizes the situation. From all available sources — and new material is often offered to necessitate a change of opinion — the student of the past tries to reconstruct the picture of some human being who has been of importance in the world's

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development: Alexander, Napoleon, Henry VIII, Lincoln. The acts of this person are studied as they are reported in contemporary records; the diverse judgments, passed upon him by those of his own day, are gathered and collated; attempt is made to get a sense of the general feeling of the community concerning him, if any such definite drift of judgment can be discovered. His letters, if any exist, are eagerly read, and the letters he received from others; the petty *ana* of the day are sifted with a fine-tooth comb in the hope of new facts, additional light. Then, bringing these scattered shreds of information together in a synthesis that really looks quite imposing, the historian proudly draws his character sketch, and it seems satisfactory and convincing,—until another specialist comes along to knock the picture into a cocked hat and give the world one that may be as much guesswork as the other!

Of course, the difficulty grows apace just in proportion as you go back in time; the records become scander, the testimony harder to get, the accurate transmission of facts less certain. And so history, so far as it deals with the description of personality, might be defined as a series of reconstructed guesses, intelligent in using what is offered in aid, and overcoming so far as may be the insuperable obstacles that confront all such efforts to solve the unattainable: a true portrait of a human being by the hand of another. Strictly speaking, it has never been achieved and never

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will be. Not only do you not know a person out of bygone days, and never can know him; you do not know a contemporary. Think of the gross caricatures of any leading politician to-day derived through press and partisan picture! What do you and I really know of the intentions of Kaiser Wilhelm, or the secret counsels of Mr. Asquith, or of the purpose of the Progressive Party in the United States? To be sure, we talk glibly about these things and assume a virtue if we have it not; but be honest with yourself and thoughtful for a moment, and you will readily grant that your ignorance is superb, yours and mine and everybody's.

Then take an excursion into old times and ask yourself what your idea of a character like Nero is. Frankly, does he seem to you a man at all? Is he not rather a hideous, inconceivable monster, playing his fiddle to the orchestral accompaniment of the flames of Rome? And yet, on second thought, you must confess that he was a human being, neither more nor less, to be explained somehow by the laws of human psychology. Whereupon you begin to suspect that the accounts of him do not give the correct picture; somehow or other he is out of drawing in the stock accounts, and you welcome a Stephen Phillips when he tries to show the Roman emperor as a weak, self-indulgent esthete, gradually undermining his character until he is led into the incredible cruelties for which he is notorious.



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It is noticeable that the trend of the modern historical reshaping of characters in the past is as a rule in the direction of whitewashing them, when their earlier reputation was dark. This simply means that we have applied a better knowledge of human nature to their case as well as scanned the records more carefully for new views upon the complex question of what any human being really is. Recognizing this complexity, we see that we must present the character with more of variety and contradiction than before, when it was shown as all white or all black,—a too easy disposition of so mixed a matter. In the end, we think a bit better of Henry VIII or Nero perhaps, — yes, even of the Devil himself, who, according to the homely saw, may not be as black as he is painted. He had such good qualities in Milton's epic that the great Puritan poet, in spite of himself, made him his hero, quite the most enjoyable personage in the drama of man's fall.

No, we know not the men and women of the past, nor our contemporaries, nor the members of our own families, not even ourselves. Every man is a mystery to himself, and which way the cat will jump is uncertain to the end. The Greeks knew whereof they spoke when they coined those terrible words: "Know thyself." They saw that life holds nothing more difficult, and worth essaying. For, in so far as we know ourselves, we may know others.

## The Soul Behind

**I**N the best of all possible worlds the face should be an index of character. And it is likely that the general opinion of the present world would lean that way. People judge character by countenance, and believe they find a correspondence between the lines limned by living and the soul that behind these surface signs really represents personality.

Is the theory true? Oscar Wilde, in his remarkable, morbid study, "The Picture of Dorian Gray," sharply contrasts human beauty and brains. "Beauty, real beauty," he says, "ends where an intellectual expression begins. Intellect is in itself a mode of exaggeration, and destroys the harmony of any face. The moment one sits down to think, one becomes all nose, or all forehead, or something horrid. Look at the successful men in any of the learned professions. How perfectly hideous they are. Except, of course, in the church. But then, in the church they don't think. A bishop keeps on saying at the age of eighty what he was told to say when he was a boy of eighteen, and as a natural consequence he always looks absolutely delightful."

The epigrammatic cynicism is typical of the author

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and, of course, need not be taken too seriously. But the question it begets is piquant and arresting. It is likely that most thoughtful people have occasionally wondered, when they have been confronted by some rascal with an angel face, or looked upon the ugly physiognomy of a saint, whether, after all, the popular idea that the outward semblance is an index of the inner state is not misleading.

The question is greatly complicated by the obvious fact that we all read into a face the attributes we have learned, from contact with a person, he really possesses. Therefore, all goodness imputed to a countenance from such knowledge is of dubious value, to say the least. We do not expect a bank-president to look like a yokel, nor the leader of a great humanitarian movement like a cutthroat. Those faces have got to bear some symbolic resemblance, we feel, to the activities of their owners; hence, we see in them the qualities that should be there. The true test, and the only one of scientific value, would be to take a dozen human beings so garbed as to throw no light upon their occupations, half of them worthless and criminal, the other half the salt of the earth, and, mixing them together and standing them up in a row, let a jury, no one of whom ever set eyes on them before, pronounce upon their characters and kinds of work. It would be a vastly interesting experiment, and some of us feel by no means cocksure that the result would not establish and confirm the theory of "misfit faces," to use an expression

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adopted by an anonymous writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* some years ago. I, for one, very much doubt my ability to separate the sheep from the goats under such conditions of test.

It is with this feeling in mind as to the lack of correspondence between character and countenance that Rostand has drawn his Cyrano. The poor fellow, with his obesity and his monstrous nose, is anything but a lyric figure; yet he has the brains and the poetry so that he can hide in the shadow and woo Roxane for the handsome Christian, who is a tailor's model for intellect. Christian furnishes the body and Cyrano the soul for that joint-wooing. And at last Roxane appreciates, though too late, the nobility and beauty that hide behind a homely exterior. The masterpieces of literature have not seldom embodied this pathetic contrast, man's sense of his unideal presentment, so incongruous with his best thought and feeling.

Perhaps the insistence on the correspondence between body and brain, character and countenance, is based upon the human hunger for unity, for the sequence of cause and effect. Good action ought to translate itself into the lineaments: a soulful eye, meaning soul; a delicate peach-bloom complexion, a like delicacy of nature; and a firm mouth, an inflexible will. It may be conceded that the great majority believe in these correspondences. And it is certain that practically all the world acts upon this assumption. Whatever our philosophic theory, when it comes to everyday

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action we get a quick impression from a face, and make up our minds about the personality behind it; we have to have some such short-cut to a decision, and this is the natural one. And if we have some understanding of the conditions in our complex lives which mold the features, we cannot, in ordinary cases, go far wrong in our judgments.

Then, often, the first instinctive opinion may be modified by later experience, as we become what is called "acquainted" with the person on trial. No type is more familiar than the "intuitive" man, who goes by his impressions in this way and tells you that he has never been fooled, that his offhand estimate, made instantly and never changed, is perfectly trustworthy. Many a business man has taken this kind of judgment from his wife, as likely as not against his own feeling, and found that she was right; women are credited, with considerable show of reason, with special powers in this intuitive sizing up of character from appearance.

Yet it cannot be denied by one who chews the cud of life ruminatingly, and hesitates to arrange his beliefs in changeless categories, that there is much in this contradictory and well-nigh baffling universe to give him pause when he tries to set up a regular causal connection between the soul that molds the face and the face that mirrors the soul. At times, he has the feeling that there ought to be such correspondence, and would be if all were ordered aright; but he is not so

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sure about it. His state of mind is admirably expressed in the words of Sam Lawton in Mrs. Stowe's "Oldtown Folks," a book which we fear the younger generation has hardly heard of. Lawton is venting his mental uncertainty as to life's riddle: "Wal, sometimes I think it is, and then again, I dunno."

At bottom, I suspect that the attempt to make the face a title-page of what lies beneath and follows after is but a part of man's general attempt to make an essentially mysterious world a bit less mysterious by reading it in terms of logic and causal connection. Art of all sorts is continually striving to do this by offering explanations where life does not, by showing the whole where life gives but a partial peep, by introducing regularity and beauty into what seems mostly tangle and distortion. Nor is this a pessimistic conclusion. It may be in the scheme of things that the soul should be detected in spite of "this muddy vesture of decay," as the old poet calls the body, not because of it; and the frequent association of a plain face with all the Christian virtues may be a method of suggesting to us wordlings that we must look away from the flesh to the spirit, and remember that the one is but the transient companion of the other.



## The Irony of Success

**T**HE irony of success lies in its looking so successful. The irony, indeed, is dual: the philosopher smiles a slow, wise smile, when he sees how others receive the success, and how the recipient himself takes it. It is in such spectacles that the gods must find their amusement, if they be dowered with a sense of humor.

Success, in the traditional, worldly sense, means the attainment of those desirables: position, place, and pelf. The man who becomes prominent in a decent way — to say nothing of him who becomes notorious, and there are circles where that is success — is a successful man; so is he who rolls up money; or he who sets before himself not so much prominence as power, behind which he perhaps masks, yet gloats on the feeling it brings,— a sense of controlling men or events or the physical laws of the universe. To set up an aim, whatever it may be, and then to gain it; this is commonly reckoned as success among men.

For the good of the soul, it is salutary to look things square in the face, if only once a year, and no time is better than the new year, with all its chances and changes, its certain tests and trials, its joys and sor-

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rows, the infinite opportunities it offers for redress, repentance, reform, growth, and the exercise of the higher activities of one's nature. The irrefutable fact is that, in the estimation of life which sees it in its true proportions, success is none of these gauds and baubles of living. Success is spiritual, and nothing else. You succeed in the great art of life just according as you have formed character, advanced in the exercise of truth, purity, and kindness.

Failure, contrariwise, whatever be the conspicuity of your post or the resounding nature of your accomplishment before men, is to end life without having, on the whole, evolved out of those lower conditions into something loftier and lovelier. Does this seem a hard saying? If so, O friend, it is because you have fallen into an easy acceptance of the notion that there is a difference between preaching and practising; that we may declare of a Sunday that the really important matter is spiritual progress, for ourselves and for the world, without practically meaning it at all. But such self-deception is insidiously undermining. Face the facts, and see without a blench or a denial that, unless it be said that this world is not based four-square on moral foundations, we cannot escape the conclusion that life's only meaning, to the thoughtful eye, lies in its being a spiritual battleground upon which we are all engaged in daily conflict, always winning or losing, gaining in strength or growing weak from our wounds, and, as from the shaping of swords, acquiring character.



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If one thinks at all below the surface of life, one simply cannot get away from this truth.

This is the reason that the great so-called tragic pictures of life in literature do not place the emphasis upon the mere matter of death; why should they, since we all must die, and if that is tragic there is nothing but tragedy in human fate? The tragedy in "Macbeth" does not inhere in the deaths of the king and his liege lady, but in the awful spiritual disaster that befalls them through the power of a worldly temptation to seize place and power. And in the same way, the tragedy of King Lear lies not in his passing, but in the pitiable weakness and shortsightedness which led him to mistake the blunt honesty of the faithful Cordelia and so turn to her faithless sisters for comfort and protection. If Lear were not to blame at all for his end, then he would be but a meaningless puppet in the hands of an inscrutable fate.

The original title of Frances Squire's strong novel, "The Ballingtons," was "The Survival of Ferdinand Ballington"; the publishers, for practical purposes of advertisement, shortened the thing and thereby obscured its fine satiric purport. For, in surviving, Ballington exhibits to the reader a splendid example of complete spiritual failure, yet prosperous in the worldly sense; while his beautiful wife, dying, is the book's outstanding illustration of true success, albeit the fleshpots are not for her. Ballington, in other words, survives in the biological sense alone.

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The shining spiritual successes of history have been prevaillingly poor and humble persons: John the Baptist, Christ, Socrates, Epictetus, à Kempis, and a sweet host more. The world's records show no more unsuccessful person, judged by worldly tests, than was the founder of the Christian religion, viewed at the time of his early death.

"But," says he of practical bent, always and ever demanding some reward for work, "some equivalent in the world or from God, for the long struggle and the hard-won victory, shows us that it pays. If we set out to make money, and get it, we can at least lie back and hear it chink, we can purchase with it many things desired and desirable, we can make our families comfortable, even after our death; and, before and after that event, can do much in a public way to help suffering humanity, not to mention no end of innocent gratification in the way of art and literature and travel. What is your balancing compensation?"

It might be a sufficient reply to say that, quite aside from whether one likes it or not, entirely apart from rewards, the world happens to be founded on spiritual facts, and unless the individual has succeeded in the well-nigh impossible task of killing his higher nature, he knows it, however much he may bluster and dodge the stern, inevitable issue.

Recompense there is, nevertheless. Whatever be the station attained, the material success piled up, the importance realized, without that validation of conscience,

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"uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Have you observed a more enviable expression of happiness upon the faces of those called successful? I wot not. The face, which we agree to call the index of the spirit, reports some dreadful secrets concerning some in high places, and those faces rise before you as you read these words. Why do captains of industry turn in their later years to an almost rabid practice of philanthropy? It might be unfair to say, to quiet a guilty conscience; yet it is perhaps not entirely because in their maturity they see more clearly that service is better than grab.

Upon the faces of the spiritually successful one observes the peace that passeth all understanding; and knows that it is but an index of a state within. Neither temporal change, time, disaster, nor death can take this away. Riches can be removed in a night and must be left to others in the end; naked we came and naked we shall depart. But a character that is the result of the consistent struggle of a lifetime,—*that* is a permanent possession. Nothing can take it away, and, though we live a thousand lives, it can but increase with the cycles and be a moving force through all worlds.

## Keep on Working

**H**EALTH, work, and religion are the three things which make life least a bore and most a blessing. Nor need work apologize to the other two. Work of the right kind conduces to health and becomes religion; hence the Scriptural commendation of good workmen by Solomon: "They shall maintain the fabric of the world, and in the handiwork of their craft is their prayer."

It was Burke, I believe, who with this in mind offered the advice: "Work, work, and never despair; but even if you do despair, keep on working." He knew it for a chief antidote against hopelessness.

Ruskin once said that there were three desiderata for a happy life: congenial work, not too much of it, and a fair return for one's labor. As to this last, he did not mean a mere reward in money, but a sense in the worker that his product is of use, of value to fellow-men, that he has not in this sense labored in vain. The return may come in the respect of the community, its readiness to intrust him with some undertaking of importance to the general weal,—in this, rather than in the sum he is paid. The big thing is the consciousness in the worker that he is a help, not a



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hindrance, to the social machine; that he makes something that has beauty or utility or, better yet, both.

The number of those who work in a way to illustrate Ruskin's ideal makes but a small fraction of the great army of workers. Consider the misfits, for one thing. It is astonishing how many folk will say to you, "My business is merely a manner of money-getting. It is distasteful to me in the extreme and I would get out of it to-morrow if I could. My pleasure comes from the hours outside my work." What a pity this is, for if a human being has any right, it is the right of congenial employment, the chance to do what he is interested in, that which stimulates his faculties and draws out his best endeavor. It is only by doing such work that he becomes of full value to society. But for various reasons mortals go into work for other than the imperative reason of calling: because the business was handed down from father to son; because a stern necessity of self-support demanded that the first work that came to hand should be done; or, again, because the rewards were so glittering that repugnance was overcome. And yet, surely, all men and women should be doing the manner of work most to their liking, most expressive of their personality; the one thing they were born to do, and therefore can do happily and do best.

Parents have a terrible responsibility here, and too often misconceive it, when they compel their young ones to take up some form of activity not suited to their powers. It would be well to understand that,

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whenever serious-minded, well-meaning young persons have a deep conviction that a certain sort of work calls them, they should be allowed to give it a trial. By doing so, either they find that it is their true occupation, or not, and so, satisfied, turn to other work. But if they do not give it a trial, they will be dissatisfied to their death-day. The beginning and basis of the right kind of a life, then, is choosing wisely one's work. The world has no use for misfits, and the misfits are unhappy, poor creatures, when half the time it is not altogether their fault, but the fault of their environment or necessity.

Think, also, of the immense number of human beings who work under the wrong conditions: hours overlong, work-places lacking air and light, needless harshness, even cruelty, of employers, the nature of the toil brutalizing and demoralizing. The figures would sadden, and the facts appal, could they be comprehended to their full extent. It was with this abuse of work, as it touched the children, in mind that great-hearted Mrs. Browning, half a century ago, wrote that piercing "Cry of the Children," which, in its white-hot passion of loving sorrow, was one of the documents of the day, and led on to our own, when industrial conditions are being bettered.

Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,  
O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,  
And the children doubt of each.

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Even when the physical conditions that surround the work are endurable or pleasant, that work is not what it should be that lacks a sense of aim and accomplishment. It is better to make something one can take a pleasure in the making of; but how seldom is that true of the worker! Grant, with the old poet, that to sweep a room in the right spirit "makes that and the action fine"; still, to be honest, there is work and work, and it is hard to see how the labor of a man in the stockyards, in whatever spirit done, can give that inward satisfaction which ought to come from every kind of human labor, no matter how fruitless or lowly.

A special danger has arisen from the modern differentiation of work, for the reason that, where once the head, hand, and heart collaborated in a trinity of activity to the making of a seemingly whole, now, with the advent of machinery, the labor has largely become partial, blind, and so pleasureless. To make a pin may not be esthetic work, but it is much better than to make the head of a pin, because in the former case you are at least intelligently producing something of wholeness and usefulness. Manhood and womanhood should be retained in the work, but to make the head of a pin has the tendency to make a machine out of a human being: it is not a finished product, but merely part of the process of its making.

It is a satire to talk about pleasure in one's work under some conditions. The present-day handicraft movement is a reaction to the better conditions of work

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in an age past when the artisan, the workman, was also the artist, having joy of his labor, and so preserving his humanity. Doubtless, we shall gradually so alter the social wrongs and evils, which now make this planet appear a little damaged, and install the worker in work so congenial, so close-fitted to his aptitude and desire, that it will be his deepest satisfaction and most lasting solace: that which steadies, rectifies, uplifts, and rejoices him throughout his days and up to the final rest. Nay, are we not altering our conceptions of Heaven in order to allow of happy, useful, unselfish work there,—work, instead of the older notion of sitting around in an elegant leisure enlivened by select music?

Work, ideally, should be congenial, fruitful, and the worker aware of his worth to the world. Nobody works harder than the idler; he has on his hands the dire task of killing time. Knowing the awfulness of vacuity, he fills the day with a semblance of activity, while gnawing at his peace is a sense of the barren folly of it all. The finest argument for real work is the spectacle of its counterfeit presentment.





## Heredity and Character

**I** ONCE saw a turtle tethered to a piece of string, the other end of which was fastened to a large basin of muddy water, in which he might disport himself when wearied of land explorations. The string was long enough to allow him to walk lumberingly for quite a distance in a line which described a radius from the pail as a center. When he had reached the limit of the circle and the tightening of the bond told him that such was the case, the torpid animal, with projected, yearning head and big staring eyes, still moving onward, as he thought, crept in a slow circumference round the central basin, drawn by the urgency of the confining cord.

“Poor beast,” mused I, “does he not typify man, striving toward some desired end or aim, his path unconsciously determined and made a mere recurrent circling-round, by the inevitable secret forces of environment and heredity?”

In truth, modern thought, especially in its scientific aspects, has tended to emphasize the tyrannous influence of the ante-natal powers that condition character and make self-striving seem often futile. Environment, too, is another dominant force of which we hear

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much,—if not too much. If we choose to carry out the idea to its logical extreme, all will-power becomes but a figment of the brain and our doctrine that of the fatalist. Man is then an automaton, pushed blindly on to his doom, given the appearance of freedom in order that he may have heart enough to live with some courage and hope, rather than — accepting the fact that he is foreordained to fail — take his life and so anticipate his fate. Predestination was familiar to the world in the Calvinistic theology; here, in later time, it receives a wider and even sterner application.

Whatever of plausibility there may be in this latter-day mode of thinking, one thing is sure: the main work of the world has been done on quite another assumption. Since time out of mind, man has gone cheerfully ahead, believing that he had the right and ability to choose, confident that he was the architect of his own fortunes, and filled with emulation because of the belief. His attitude, and the conviction behind it, are expressed in this fine passage from old Longinus: "Nature never designed man to be a groveling and ungenerous animal but brought him into life, and placed him in the world, as in a crowded theater, not to be an idle spectator, but spurred on by an eager thirst of excelling, ardently to contend in the pursuit of glory. For this purpose she implanted in his soul an invincible love of grandeur, and a constant emulation of whatever seems to approach nearer to divinity than himself."

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This has the true ring, for it tallies with experience, both one's own and that of man's in general. One may grant the importance of Taine's categories of the race, the milieu and the moment, as immensely influential in life, but at the same time hold on with a death grip dictated by commonsense and necessity alike, to the notion that we are architects of our fortunes, at the last. Philosophically speaking, the old debate over freewill and fate will never cease to split mankind into opposing camps of theory; but practically, man will continue to act as if in his right to choose lay the hour of victory. Moreover, it is rather a comfort to reflect that the latest biological hypotheses incline to give more efficacy to environment and education and personal initiative than was conceded a generation ago when Darwin burst upon the world with his astounding new theory of life. For a while heredity seemed all in all, and this world-effort a mere scratching of the surface, where deep-lying forces were at work to set at naught such eleventh-hour troubling. But now we are coming to feel that a very young child with a bad family history, if only subjected early enough to the best kind of influences at home and in school, may entirely overcome the sinister handicap with which he started,—a handicap regarded at first as well-nigh fatal.

In fact, the world will never cease to believe in character as more than an accident; the very definition of the word suggests overcoming obstacles and shaping conduct toward ends. The right sort of man is irri-

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tated by the mere thought that he lives in that kind of universe where there is no relation between self-conscious striving and a desired result. He may not have thought it out, but he instinctively accepts that noble saying: "As a category of knowledge, character is the most ultimate thing in the universe." If, by the time middle age has been accomplished, the belief in one's power of controlling events and shaping actions has dimmed, it is not because life has disproved our faith, but only that we sadly confess that, in the words of Stevenson, we have "tried a little, failed much." The theory was right, but our strength to put it into practice, alas, was so uncertain! At twenty we dream, at forty we dine; yes, but we still might dream nobler dreams at forty, at sixty, at eighty, if only we had fought the good fight steadily, unflinchingly, to the last ditch. We must avoid blaming the laws of the universe for our own inability to obey them.

When this fatalistic view gets into literature, it produces a good deal of superficial, surface brilliancy with a sure dry-rot of substance. Life is not a going concern, in the business phrase, with such a theory back of it; and hence, and naturally, its reflection in letters is a sort of static presentation, instead of the dynamics that move the emotions and stimulate the brains of readers. Where, before, the writers were likely to talk about the immortals, now they are more likely to talk about the immorals; the change is not, on the whole, enjoyable.

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The modern man has one thing hammered into him, from the time he goes to his first school to the time he lies down for final sleep: that this world is a reign of law. It is true, of course, but perhaps we have harped upon it a little too insistently in relation to certain higher aspects of living. Maybe it is well to remind ourselves that a law is only a stale miracle; that to Adam the first sunrise must have been a sensation comparable to that to-day if before our very eyes the heavens opened and the white throne of God were revealed in all its splendor.

Long after the particular theories which make our age so important in our own estimation, it will still be true that life, the great spiritual adventure, beckons to each and offers its chances and rewards; and that even as our forefathers could choose and strive and succeed, so can we. We continue to guess about things, and the modern guess is in some ways shrewder; but man is substantially the same creature, and ancestry, heredity, environment, personality, are but names for everlasting facts. Courage is no outworn attitude, and faith, as of yore, is a sign of good health, both of body and soul.

## Life the Play

A FRENCHMAN has said that life is a comedy for those who think, a tragedy for those who feel. But many of us both think and feel, and for all such life is either tragi-comedy or comi-tragedy; the former if, despite the tragic elements, it ends well, in the simple phrase; the latter if, with all the unquestionable alleviations, it ends ill,—in a blind alley which awaits us all. And this depends a good deal on the way we take it. To Pippa, and to Browning back of her, "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world"; whereas to the melodious Preacher all is vanity; it is the same world that both face, only they face it in different moods. In other words, the problem is hypothetical, partly because the play is unfinished, partly because it is colored by the personal view of all who play in it,—the most formidable list extant of *dramatis personæ*: to wit, the children of men.

The type of religionist familiar to the present day and generation declares that the life beyond the grave explains life this side of it, and reconciles the disasters of earth. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," is the promise, solemn, beautiful, deeply

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comforting, of the mystic John. And so hope gilds the gloom, and even through sorrow shines the immortal word.

But for those who conclude that death ends personal consciousness,—and there are now many such,—life becomes not a reasonable plan so much as a baffling mystery. The plan is explicable so far as this world is concerned; such persons find little difficulty in adjusting themselves to the laws which govern human action and lead to success in the conventional meaning of the word; but however well they may succeed as the world judges, back of all earthly shows they are aware of the sphinx, silent, inscrutable, eternal; for them at least the riddle remains unsolved.

Some in this position take refuge in pleasure, sensual or high as the case may be. Some, with a sad stoicism, decide to play the game well, whatever it may mean; to act their rôles as they should be done, and when the curtain rings down, to say *good-night* in kindness and with head erect. A few, although believing that the elder faith in a final happy goal must be abandoned, profess to find this world — the world of work and love and honorable joy — enough, even if the night cometh when no man may work. Bernard Shaw is one such, and doubtless he has his followers who will cordially respond to these ringing words:

“I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is

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a sort of splendid torch, which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

Still others, weaklings as we call them, blow out their poor brains in despair, maddened by the spectacle of the inevitable *cul-de-sac*, their position analogous to the Roman who fell on his sword when honor was no more or fate went against him in battle,—save that these latter-day deniers of life no longer relish it, where the Roman simply turned his back upon it when, for him, it was over. But a thing to note in this see-saw of conflicting and afflicting guesses at the insoluble is that each and all must perforce adopt *some* philosophy. These mighty matters cannot be demonstrated as we demonstrate in mathematics; the past, with its neat, mechanical theories of the universe unchallenged by thoughtful minds, has of necessity given way to a larger view, whether affirmative or negative. Meanwhile, a reasonable working hypothesis must be chosen, for living calls for action. The cock-sureness of our forefathers is replaced by some such understanding and attitude.

And here the importance of the purified emotions must be realized, carefully separating them from mere superstition, and that atavistic racial instinct which craves life and therefore postulates it. We are not foolish to trust the spiritual perceptions, since they are the oldest and deepest part of us, and in confiding in them we are exercising a faith which lies at the bottom



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of all valid human action; as in all processes of reason we assume the reality and reliability of our thinking process, an attitude expressed in Des Cartes' "I think, therefore I am." It is no shame to act as if a thing were so which cannot be proved, for upon such confidence all life moves, whether in practical affairs or the sternest method of logic. Two and two make four, we say; why so? Simply because the mind thinks it; on Mars, two and two may make five. What is truth? We ask with Pontius Pilate, and have a deeper sense of the mystery than could have been his. It is perhaps a relation rather than a fact, the relation of the human mind to a reality forever beyond our ken. The philosophy adopted for individual use will be a web woven of wonderfully complex causal threads; ancestry, epoch, geography, immediate environment, education, Will,—all that personality as the sum total of these influences implies, and something more. And it is of great import to every human soul that some theory be chosen and acted upon, for the play is on, and while we may pause for a moment, like the philosopher, to look upon the scene and meditate, primarily we are all on the stage, "And all the men and women merely players," and it is our part to play well, gradually learning that the finest art means to be true to our highest thought, that only thus can we impress upon the auditors that action is the solution of the art of living, the greatest of all the arts.

So, although we may, in turn, sit and applaud the

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piece, or criticize it, wondering if we divine its end, it is but wise to remember that our place is upon the boards, we must get us back to the stage, throwing ourselves with all heartiness into the entrancing drama of life; and cherishing the hope, which may become belief in time, that if we do our parts well the Dramatist will likewise do his, and the final act (we understand no play until that is over) send actors and audience to their homes in happiness: home, where there are light, and good cheer, and friendly, beckoning faces, yes, and a deep sense of well-being after the fever and the fret. Would the play so enthrall us, if we knew its issue, if there were no surprise at the last curtain? And would home be half so welcome had we never left it for the struggle and strain of the play of life? Hark to the call bell; up rolls the curtain; the drama is under way. Linger not in the wings with beating hearts, to speculate and question; the murmur of life comes to you across the footlights; go out, act, grow, and so earn the coveted prize, and the reward of rest.

## An Epigram's Value

A CERTAIN man once wrote in his notebook: "At twenty we dream; at forty we dine." Long years afterwards, he ran across it, and smiled musingly. It seemed so young, so all-knowing; there was something fine and French about it. When it was written the writer firmly believed it to be quite original, a contribution by him to the *pensées* of the world. Afterward he thought of Talleyrand and La Rochefoucauld, and wondered if it were not purely derivative.

Well past forty himself, he found that while, unquestionably, he was still dining, he had by no means stopped dreaming. The diminution of dreams with middle age,—that is to say, the dimming of the ideal, and the waning use of the imagination, which, with the easy omniscience of youth he had assumed,—had not come to pass, he discovered. Indeed, his imagination was more fully awakened to the beauty of the world and the wonder of himself and of his fellow-man. His sense of poetry was keener, and his delight in the best, based on a wider experience and a more vivid sense of life's dramatic contrasts, had grown with what it had fed on. If his desires had become soberer, his vision tinged with a consciousness that the earth is a stern

## An Epigram's Value

battleground, all the better had he learned to get joy from the lyric interludes of peace and the throbbing raptures of victory. Yes, challenged by the years, his poor, cheap little bit of pseudo-philosophy did not ring true, and was seen for what it was,— a surface guess at life, neat enough in expression but with no universal note in it at all.

This is the defect in all such utterances. They have a value of form perhaps, or a taking smartness which fools the reader or hearer, who imagines he is in the presence of a profound generalization; whereas, what he receives is merely the *blasé* mood of the moment, together with a certain pride in phrasing. Heine, for example, says something in his inimitable way, and the magic of it may hide the fact that, poor fellow on his mattress grave, he is but giving vent to the personal anguish of the instant: to write is his nepenthe. Oscar Wilde took a perverse pleasure in saying, with a Greek-like perfection of phrase and form, exactly the opposite thing from what the thought might lead us to expect. It was a rather shallow trick in the main, and sadly overworked by the brilliant apostle of estheticism, but it led many to regard him as little less than a demigod. How different in tone and feeling and penetration is the Hebrew pessimism of Ecclesiastes and Job! There you hear the groundswell of the human soul, confronted by the great inexplicable contradictions of life. You respect the soul travail that lies under it, and are made larger as

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you listen. Even the melodious despair of Omar Khayyam is a different thing from the linguistic rapier-thrusts of the epigrammatist, because the Persian poet is so sad, so deeply moved in his emotions.

It would be as well, one surmises, if all authors with the epigrammatic gift were not allowed to frame their thought until they had attained to years of discretion. Then their sallies would be more likely to be sound in substance as well as felicitous in form. We do not object to the satire and cynicism of a Thackeray, because it is tempered with a genial knowledge of the world. We feel that, at forty, he knows whereof he speaks and is not venting personal spleen, but looking at the polite society of his day from behind those analytic spectacles, and distinguishing its weaknesses. Becky Sharp is true, if vicious; she is all but lovable, so human is she, and her creator is fond of her, else why did he give her so happy an end? But with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, on the contrary, you are repelled by the bitterness of the picture.

An exception might be made in favor of the young poets and essayists whose power of crystallizing human experience in a *bon mot*, a memorable line or a haunting phrase, seems divination more than knowledge of the world. It is the beautiful folly of youth to dream a star, some one has finely said; and in such a mood you get the epigram without a sting, the wit that stimulates but does not bite, and the laughter that has in it no hard, metallic sound.

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Even when an epigram flashes light into some dark corner of personality, it is more often than not only a half-truth, needing the corrective touch of time which enables the thinker to walk all round his subject and see it from many sides. It is rare that, with polish and concision for an aim, there is not a sacrifice of the symmetry of complete truth. It is a danger that forever lurks in this kind of verbal gymnastics. "The more I see of men, the better I like dogs," said Madame de Staël. Taken simply as a mode of expressing a love for the canine, this is admirable, and delights all dog-lovers,—and their name is legion. But if we are to accept it as a general opinion on men, it is extremely misleading and unfair to a sex which, even in these days of subjugation, can give a better account of itself than the great Frenchwoman would have us believe. Yet, unless the French woman-wit had put it that way, we should not have remembered it, nor had so distinct an impression of her attitude toward a certain species of animal.

In youth, we play with words and prefer cleverness to accuracy. In maturity, we are more inclined to weigh our sentences and measure their influence upon others.

It is perhaps fair to say that the pleasure to be derived from any epigram is too expensive, if the price we pay for it be the loss of faith and the blight of disillusionment.

Again and again, a false antithesis is set up by these

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pinchbeck substitutes for gold, as in the sentence with which we began. Why must one either dream or dine? Are the two incompatible? Not at all. But reconcile them and you ruin your smart saying; there's the rub. Surely, there is a time for dreaming and a time for dining; there is Scripture warrant for the idea. It were the better wisdom to let the years refine the palate to the civilized pleasures of the table, and elevate our dreams until they rise to the prophetic vision of the seer. The dream must be of the right sort. If you do not dine well, the dream may be of the other kind, even the dream that is called nightmare. The homely and the high have a sure connection, and woe to him who, in cultivating his soul, neglects his stomach; for, with an empty stomach, there can be naught but an emptiness and a carking cynicism in the soul.

How then shall middle age alter the callow sentence: "At twenty we dream, at forty we dine"?

Let it be written: "At twenty we dream, at forty we are still dreaming, for all men are dreamers until they die — and after." This is the allegory of an epigram and the years.

## Beneath the Threshold

**E**VERY man leads three lives: the life social, in relation to his friends, and the world in general; the life psychic, in which he communes with his own spirit; and the subliminal life, expressing itself in flashes and surges of living that wonderfully excel his usual self. For the most part, he is walking on the plain, where he is one of a vast number making up the social complex. Occasionally he dives into the depths of his own being, to rediscover his soul. And still more infrequently he is lifted to the heights of inspiration by the urge of forces which, below the threshold of his conscious life, seize upon him momentarily, and turn him from man into demigod.

We know comparatively little as yet of the powers and possibilities of this strange third self in man. What are its boundaries? Under what stimulus will it rise into consciousness and alter our lives? Is it primarily intellectual in character or the child of emotional experience? And so on with many another flocking question,—since the field is new to investigation, and human psychology, under the modern microscope, has taken on an aspect radically differing from the older philosophical conceptions. Is this mysterious



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part of a man, which is apparently beyond the control of his will and outside the realm of his consciousness, the result of all his past life, or is it ancestral, so that an act of his dictated by his subliminal self is really his forbears working in him? Or does it go back far earlier to a racial impulse? Or may it be called the imperial will of the whole of humanity, expressing itself through one puny personal medium? These are vast, awe-inspiring suggestions, shading off into oriental mysticism on the one hand, or becoming tangled with the puerilities of pseudo-spiritualism, or diving deep down into the arcana of the human spirit as revealed in the laboratory by the scalpel of science.

Whatever the explanation, and however sure we may already be that the progress of science will bring us in good time to a clear understanding of the mystery beneath the threshold, it is well at the present time to appreciate this capacity of man for rising above his normal self, its importance in his higher life, and that of the race; and its implications for religion, literature, philosophy, and daily life. It were a mistake not to understand that, just as a great ocean steamer has by far its larger part beneath the surface of the water and hence invisible, so man's hidden part, rarely coming into view, may be,—although with some persons never,—a large and potent portion of his personality.

In literature, to say a word on that particular application of the thought, it means what has been traditionally called "inspiration," as in religion it implies

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"conversion,"—the spirit of God descending upon a soul hitherto unclaimed. An author is inspired, we say; what do we mean? Surely, that he achieves that which he is not aware to be within his power; exhibits a gift (note the word) rather than a recognized capacity; transcends for a little his everyday controlled ability. I was once taking an afternoon walk with a distinguished novelist whose mornings were just then engaged in the writing of a piece of fiction now regarded as among the best American works.

"How did you get on to-day?" I asked.

"Not very well," was the reply; "I did not surprise myself once."

It is this element of surprise for the author which gives to a creative literary work that quality whereat the reader catches his breath and feels his soul uplift. Of old, as the word "inspiration" shows, we deemed it came from on high; *in-spiro*, we breathed it in. Now, guided by science, we derive it from below; up it wells from the regions of unconscious cerebration whose central station rules our lives, into the tiny area where self-consciousness reigns and the will works with seeming supremacy. But from whithersoever it come, it is beyond volitional control, that is the main point; and a feeling of awesome wonder is properly begotten for this reason as we watch its workings: an "Ode to a Nightingale" from a Keats, a "Fall of the House of Usher" from a Poe, an "Unfinished Symphony" from a Schubert.

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To argue that it is not only independent of our will-power at the moment of its appearance, but aside from any control we may exercise or act we may perform, would land us in fatalism, pure and simple. Then are we indeed the sport of ancestry and race, a frail mechanism pushed on to our doom by blind subconscious force. But, contrary to this depressing, nay, paralyzing, idea there is much to justify the faith that it is in accordance with the tenor of our whole lives, along with the operation in us of the ante-natal influences and those summed up in the words "education" and "environment" that the flash of inspiration comes; that the tongue of the man of letters is suddenly tipped with fire, and the man of God speaks for the nonce as never man spake.

In close alliance with this dimly guessed power are the unconscious or semi-conscious visions of sleep; the dreams that seem prophetic of coming events, like Joseph's aforetime, and the subtle telepathic communication of man with man, or animal with man. A field, this, as fascinating as it is immense, and so far the trails across it are hardly blazed by the pioneers of psychic investigation. A clergyman, who in his day was regarded as a pulpit orator of high rank, told me that, leaving his unfinished sermon Saturday night at a difficult point in the argument, he had come to know that the solution would be given him in sleep, and his Sunday task successfully completed. Readers of that son of genius, Robert Louis Stevenson, will remem-

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ber his delightful and remarkable essay on the "little people," as he called them, in "A Chapter on Dreams." He referred to the imps of his imagination who, while he lay asleep, set the stage for him in a lighted theater where was played out for his delectation many a dramatic story, sometimes interrupted by an early awaking, but often played to the end and so furnishing the great romancer with fiction ready-made to his hand.

"How often," exclaims Stevenson, "have these sleepless Brownies done me honest service, and given me, as I sat idly taking my pleasure in the boxes, better tales than I could fashion for myself." And then, to prove how vivid were such memories, the novelist narrates one of the stories, "exactly as it came" to him. And he adds the curious information that his printed tale, "Olalla," was given to him in this way, he merely adding the scenery, two characters and the moral, "such as it is." Here is one instance, where many similar could be named, of the magic of the Mage, who, behind the scenes of life, moves us to great issues and bids us remember the world beneath the threshold, and respect its might.

## Local Minds

**D**OES any one of your friends write a letter quite so charming in a chatty, informal way as he — it is more likely to be a she — who has a local mind? I mean the mind keenly interested in local happenings, on the *qui vive* for neighborhood gossip and quick to gather the very latest news. How good it is, when away on your vacation, to receive a missive from this kind of correspondent, who is left in town,— it gives you such a feeling of superiority when you are able to be away yourself,— from whom you learn just what you want to know: who is married or engaged to be, the strange mishap of Mr. Blank and the startling good fortune of Mrs. Blandish,— all the social chitchat that is so small yet bulks so big within the little confines of your particular experience.

It is all conveyed with a light touch and in a confidential tone, so that the talk on paper trips along as easily as if it were by word of mouth. As a rule, you will not find this pattern of person overly interested in large general affairs, unless such are by chance related to the local; but for the latter he has an absolute genius.

Naturally, the degeneration of this excellent faculty gives us the quidnunc, the town nuisance, the vicious

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gadder-about. But in its place and in its purity, it is as refreshing as a northwest wind on a mid-August day: refreshingly human, heart-warming and homely in the way it gets into your liking, it and the individual who possesses it.

For, after all, it is but right and natural that one's interest should start with the local. If charity begins at home, so do many other things. To the countryman, the little doings of the village and countryside are of deep concern, and his excitement over some bucolic detail provokes but shallow scorn, since it is all a matter of scale. We denizens of the town, pluming ourselves on wider views and reviews, forget that here again, if we but shift the point of observation to that of some superior order of being — regarding mortal affairs, as it were, from Mount Olympus — the smallness and provinciality are quite as truly present. How the importance of a world-capital like London shrinks to nothing in the light of stellar imaginings!

There is something sound and sweet in this tying up to the local, this firm basing of the feet upon the near and the known. A White of Selborne or a Thoreau at Walden makes the whole world cognizant of an obscure spot on the face of the earth, not so much because of its intrinsic merit as for the reason that the naturalist himself found there what, being what he was, he would have found anywhere: to-wit, a revelation of the wonders of Nature, her wondrous manifestations and her no less wondrous laws. Emerson, lofty idealist as he was, with

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his head so often in the clouds or above them, nevertheless knew and loved the earth, and his work, as a result of this trait, has a delightful earthy smack, a plain, vernacular reality.

Hence, there is no contradiction, necessarily, between the mind with a local tinge and bias and the world-view of the philosopher, poet or historian. Rostand in a lovely line tells us we can see a star in a dewdrop; so may we see all human nature crystallized in the homeliest, most rustic specimen of the race, and range all history at a village town-meeting,—if but the eye that looks on be discerning.

The local mind in literature has always been a power. Carlyle, a Scotch peasant, comes down to London and eventually is recognized as a giant of English letters, just because he preserves the native burr to his speech and the simple, deep faith in certain spiritual fundamentals inculcated at his mother's knee. Burns, another peasant of the same great people, was always most potent in his song magic when he sang of what he saw in his native haunts,—the wee mousie, the cotter in his humble home, the bonnie lass the bard loved. Burns in Edinburgh, trying to write pure English and be literary, is a rather sad spectacle.

It is astonishing how often some small place has cradled and inspired the master minds of the world,—a place that might impart the local color to the genius that was to immortalize it: Socrates, Sophocles, Euripides, and the other Greek immortals at Athens, Goethe

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and Schiller in Weimar, Emerson and Hawthorne in Concord. It almost seems as if the best way to be universal were to be local, "true to the kindred points of heaven and home," as Wordsworth has it.

The most effective way of bringing home to the mind general principles and abstract propositions is to be concrete; to teach by parables, as did the Lord himself. There is a type of great man, of whom Lincoln is a fine example, which has the habit of illuminating some great and serious matter of conduct by the introduction of some homely saw or story, the application of which conveys the lesson. Those homely yarns of the great president, how they did their work and how memory treasures and repeats them! To the unthinking, at the time they may have seemed merely undignified, inappropriate, a piece of rather coarse, unrelated western humor. But we see now that they relieved the terrible strain of tragic life and in their sane, direct, homespun fashion taught the people truths as the language of formal philosophy never could.

When somebody remarked that Seward did n't believe in the Bible, Lincoln replied: "No wonder, he did n't write it himself." Could you by any other method get so succinct a summary of a certain trait of the man in question? Lincoln had a local mind, in the finest sense, and when Lowell called him "the first American," this among other things must have been in his thought.

There has been from the first in the American, re-



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garded as a variant of the English stock, this union of the local and the general, of the practical and the idealistic. Adventurousness and a utilitarian object were behind the American settlement, and our forefathers came over on a search for land and subsistence, feeling the general urge for conquest and discovery marking the Elizabethan era. And, on arrival, heaven knows the practical was forced upon them: the country had to be made habitable, dangers from man and nature removed, and civilization established. But along with this immediate, stern necessity, and beneath it as a motor force, went the dream and the ideal: freedom, civil and religious, sought and found, and a set of convictions that spelled hope, faith, and the democratic love of liberty.

The local mind is the salt of character. If it does not broaden out into general adaptability, it falls short of the desirable stature; but when it stands on mother earth and peers heavenward, behold the full measure of a man!

## Falling in Love

ONE of the most curious phrases in English speech is this of "falling in love," so familiar, so steadily before us that we do not see its full meaning. Regard it carefully for a moment. In the company of another human being we appear to have had an accident; we have fallen, with her, into something yclept "love." Love seems to be not so much within the two persons involved, as outside of them, awaiting their coming, biding its time for spell-weaving and for lure. Similarly, the expression, "I am in love with her," bears out the same idea on analysis; once again a joint-experience is implied, and an experience not the exclusive possession of this particular pair of mortals, but open to the race.

It is as if, walking on the shore of life beside the sea of love, he and she decided to jump in and get the exhilaration of the great change; so in they go,—they have fallen in love and felt the vast heave of its tide, the tonic of its waves, and perhaps the danger of its undertow. But in their passion they find joy in the tempests of this splendid sea and delight in the unseen treacheries of its depths.

Vernacular turns of speech usually hide, if they do

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not at first reveal, the truths of life, and this is no exception. A deep philosophical meaning lies in this pungent idiom. It is a meaning touched upon by Emerson in his great essay on love, where he declares that the beautiful human relation so-called has for its highest aim and object the training of the soul to a comprehension of what love is, that mighty and mystic principle which governs the universe. The particular love leads on to one that is wider and includes all and everything. "Thus are we put in training," says Emerson, "for a love which knows not sex, nor person, nor partiality, but which seeks virtue and wisdom everywhere, to the end of increasing virtue and wisdom."

Is this idea philosophic at the expense of the heart-warming, ordinary way of looking at it, which insists that the beloved is the sum and substance of all earthly (and heavenly) things? Is it not an affront to something sacred to suggest that, by a sort of trick of Nature, this sentiment is for our training, far beyond its immediate result in the satisfaction of two souls, each all in all to the other?

Not at all, for the very good reason that the lovers pay no heed to this ulterior lofty aim of the universe nor believe it for one moment. The splendid outer world, the ordered phenomena of sky and air, of hill and plain and valley, of land and sea and the dimpled isles that make lovely the great waters, are only so much stage-setting for the eternal drama of two in love. Like Romeo and Juliet, they use the stars as their

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private symbols, and pile Ossa on Pelion of protestations, the best possible use, to their minds, for those mighty mountains and the justification of their existence. Bird songs are choristers at their bridal service and flowers but open to sprinkle sweet odors along their festal path.

This superb self-centeredness is altogether right, the world feels; and those who look on applaud, recall their own trysting, and sigh that it is but a memory. To this beautiful pair of babes, all the love language of the past lovers, set down in books or made dear in a hundred other ways of art, is simply so much ready-made material for their use, lest they be unable of themselves completely to express their rapture. They have heard of love, and of falling in love, all their days, before the Great Adventure came their way; yes, have even smiled pityingly at the extravagances of other of the chosen; now, at last and for the one and only time, they are ready to swear, they have left the shore and are breasting the billows, and have already begun to know

—the divine intoxication  
Of the first league out from land.

It is this unconsciousness, this self-absorption, which adds a touch of pathos to the spectacle of lovers and offers to the ironic mind, as well, a chance for thoughtful amusement. Yet have the lovers altogether the best of it. They are not dupes, because they are undergoing one of the highest and holiest experiences life

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can give; they have the utilitarian justification to be found in the fact that their union makes the home possible and the state therefore secure; and the idealistic justification that falling in love is the first step of a progress of which the far-off ultimate goal is that mystic oneness with the universal principle of Love which moves the worlds, and yet, man believes, is personal;

*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.*

Moreover, the spectacle radiates out upon life, upon the unfortunate multitudes of those not in the experience, all manner of sweet influences that help mankind to live, and better human conditions. That is why great literature, in handling this solar event, exhibits this helpfulness in many ways; it would not be fundamental if it did not do this service. Thus, in "Romeo and Juliet"—to take an instance of which we have recently been reminded by witnessing the play,—the star-crossed lovers are led to the door of a tomb, there to perish. Were that the end of the drama as conceived by the poet, it would be a purely fatalistic presentation of love. The immortal twain met, fell in love, tried to surmount circumstances, failed, and in the flower of their youth and the heyday of their splendidly white-souled passion, died untimely, ere they had more than begun their love pilgrimage together.

Here is the moment, alas, where the garbled version of the play concludes and this is utterly wrong. For in the complete text the reconciliation of the rival houses

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follows the death, which thus accomplishes a most desirable good. Out of death comes life, and the divine principle of love triumphs over a feud that stands for the terrible opposing principle of hate.

Much of the modern cuttings of Shakspeare's dramas has a certain excuse, in that under the limitations of time in the modern playhouse the whole drama cannot be given. With the *entr'acte* now in vogue, Shakspeare's "two hours traffic of the stage" would be prolonged to three hours or more, if the entire play were enacted. But in the case of "Romeo and Juliet" it is genuine mutilation to remove an ending which would add but a very few minutes to the playing time and which is the philosophic relief and poetic justification of the too poignant tragedy of the tomb scene. It is a pity that our leading players do not choose to give the piece in its entirety, and so let the master-poet say to us that falling in love, while it may be destined to meet an end so sad, cannot fail to do service to others, not even lovers in the first transports being able to cut themselves off from the race, but rather leaving upon the air, breathed by all who live, a fragrance that sweetens, and an example that stills strife.

## New Acquaintances

**T**HE fact that we are inclined to think so well of persons newly met is only a phase of humanity's deep-rooted feeling that the impossible may happen. It is a touching proof of the optimism which, in the face of all past experience, looks upon each last-made acquaintance as the Ideal Personality of our dreams. And so, often the one thing needed to destroy the illusion is — further intimacy.

Cynicism is quite out of place in judging these quick impressions and sudden decisions of the human heart. Some one has defined golf as "the triumph of hope over experience"; and in a sense, why might not the definition apply to life itself? We are all hoping for the best, clinging, with counter-testimony overwhelmingly to the contrary, to some golden guess, some darling desire. And half the joy of living, did we but realize it, lies in such an attitude of mind. "I do not wish to live in a fool's Paradise," the saying runs; yet were you ever happier than before the gates were shut upon your foolish faith? It is wrong to treat as shallow and silly these fervent inclinations to seize on the new acquaintance, the companion elect, within an hour after the first meeting, as if a cheap nature were thus implied,

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either in you or the just-found friend. Friends tried and true are precious, yes; the best of all, if you will. But friendships famed in history and blazoned in literature have been of another sort: to meet and know, to look and love, to let the reason wait upon the heart's pronouncement,— this, too, is wise at times.

Who can ever forget that first meeting of Dante with Beatrice? One glance, and his fate was sealed forever, and the lady, whether on earth or in heaven, has become for all after time a type of the spiritual affection which transcends the flesh. And did not Shakspeare ask us in the sonnet, "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?" with his own amatory experience, perhaps with the "dark lady" filling his mind. In sudden likings or loves there lurks that instinct of the ages which is Nature's short-cut to knowledge, and a most convenient (if sometimes risky) substitute for the slow, cautious, and self-conscious processes of reason. It is that instinct which is at work in what is called "woman's intuition"; a power or gift by no means confined to the sex, although confessedly more often there than among the masculine persuasion. Many a man has opposed one of these intuitive opinions to his disaster; what he grandiloquently called his common-sense bade him reject the spontaneous judgment, and in the sequence he regretted his failure to trust the instant impression.

Our attitude toward the mighty forces which are implied, in one aspect or the other, in such words as "im-



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pression," "intuition," "instinct," and the like, conducts us into the fascinating psychic world which is but just opening to our modern scrutiny. We are not quite so sure as of yore that powers and principalities do not exist beyond our ken, and that the subliminal self has not laws as yet but partially understood. Those sympathetic to oriental forms of thought boldly declare that, when two persons display instantly an almost magnetic attraction for each other, it signifies relationship in an earlier existence; this idea, or something very like it, crops out again and again in Browning's poetry. Certainly, most of us have seen, if we have not been participant in, this kind of instantaneous attachment; and have noted that, instead of being a flash in the pan, it endured the shocks of the years as well as connections more sensibly formed and slower in welding. "When Time, that breaks all things, has broken the faith between friends"—Swinburne's sad line—does not seem to apply to such friendships, which to all appearances shine but the brighter with the passing of the years. Literature, past and present, is full of references which point unmistakably to this sentiment, or conviction.

In a current novel I chanced to be reading, "Dawn O'Hara," by Edna Ferber, I ran into this sentence: "We became friends, not step by step, but in one gigantic leap such as sometimes triumphs over the gap between acquaintance and liking." The truth is, mankind is naturally idealistic. We set clouds of glory

## New Acquaintances

round the new acquaintance, because we would have him so, and as yet there is not sufficient inconvenient knowledge about him to make it difficult to believe. So, too, if we have a genius for friendship, we idealize our friends by simply assuming in them their highest potentialities, and believing that they will live up to them. And it will happen, with one who is all but a stranger, that we can show more of our deeper self for the very reason that the other is not aware of our weaknesses,— is, on his side, idealizing us as well; and cheered by this confidence, we expose psychic layers lying deeper down than we ever go within the bosom of our families. And to treat this experience as if it were an amusing example of the double game of bluff, were to do it foul wrong. In one of those thrusts into human psychology which make her a great writer, George Eliot declared that we are always underestimating or overestimating each other; it is only God who can see us as we are. He strikes the balance.

But it is very safe to say that he who assumes the best in another hits nearer to the fact than he who assumes the worst. That first rosy estimate of the new-found friend, so generously taken for granted, so pathetically believed in and trusted, has a solid *raison d'être* in human nature, after all allowances are made; and trust is a kind of higher shrewdness. In our analytic, self-conscious age, it is probable that we depend too little upon the testimony of that larger Self which is outside of the petty little Me I am conscious of:



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the Self that means the race with its eons of experience working in my blood; the Self that is below the threshold of consciousness, yet potent to push me on to my destiny; the Self that is ancestral, the combined wisdom or foolishness of all my forbears influencing my every act; or the Self, if the materialistic explanation be accepted, which is the result of environment; which, as a French critic has put it, "when placed personally before a question of life or death, obeys no preconceived morality, but laws of equilibrium of a purely physical character as compelling as those of gravity."

We can well afford to-day, in view of the opening up of the deeper possibilities of personality, to trust this more generously defined Ego of ours, and to have faith in new friends, along with the old. The intuitions are not to be despised in the light of modern science; they are to be the more respected. Abt Vogler, the composer, speaking for his own art, yet with words wise and beautiful that are of widest application, said:

"The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians *know*."

## Blunders and Blunderers

**A**N oft-repeated phrase is ringing in my ears,—“old enough to know better.” Ye gods, is anybody so old, I wonder, as to avoid the mistake, to check the foolish step, to see the pitfall ere the foot stumble? I fancy not, else were we machines rather than men. We prate of the wisdom of gray hairs, and like to think of “grave and reverend signiors” (outside the play); but uncover their deeds withal, and what a motley they would appear. Nay, we are all blunderers, even from the cradle to the grave, and the infinite compassion is in nowise more steadily engaged than in forgiving man his lapses through the seven ages of his strange, eventful history.

Old enough to know better, forsooth! Lucky the mortal whose career is not wrecked, his reputation ruined, by his fatuous failure to learn even the primary rules of life's game, to say nothing of the delicacies and subtleties that make its technic so difficult a business. When we are come to years of discretion we have learned a few things, granted; but yet how prone to mishaps of our own bringing, how often under the white hairs of age lurk the stored foolishnesses of Time!

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And a blessing hides in this inept learning of life's lesson by the best of us. Our blunders, so many, so egregious, so outlasting the years, are after all a sign that we are yet alive; since when we cease to make mistakes, we cease to live. This has its frequent application and illustration in literature. Contrary, perhaps, to the usual opinion, the great writers are not those who produce perfect art-works, blameless of sin as they are splendidly creative in their endeavor. Not at all. It seems as if unequalness were a condition of genius. Shakspeare, the supreme man of the race in expression and thought, is so shockingly bad at times as to drive us to the theory that some of the work ascribed to him is not his own. We have long been told that even Homer nods, and the schoolboy who encounters the catalogue of the ships knows it without the telling. When Dante waxes theological and metaphysical all the caressing beauty of the *terza rima* cannot prevent him from being frankly a bore.

Or to take a more modern instance: Thackeray has for a generation been contrasted with Dickens, his contemporary and a man of creative power, as a master of style, and exquisite artist of letters. And so he surely was, in the broad sense. But too often this has been taken to mean that the author of "Vanity Fair" commits no literary sins, while he of Gadshill is full of them. Nothing could be further from the truth. I once went through "Vanity Fair" with this matter of artistic perfection in view, and found that the master-

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piece contained a surprising number of faults and flaws. Such a sentence, for example, as "smiling and nodding to his aunt in the carriage within"; such another one as: "He used to get drunk every night; to beat his pretty Rose sometimes; to leave her in Hampshire when he went to London for a parliamentary session, without a friend in the wide world," simply illustrate the fact that Thackeray wrote under pressure for serial publication and did not use the labor of the file as would an author of the same class to-day. For the same reason, on a certain page old Osborne is informed of George's regiment going to war; and ten pages later hears of it again as if brand-new. Or again: the author, having claimed the privilege "of peeping into Miss Amelia's bedroom," asks why he should not declare himself the confidant of Rebecca as well; overlooking the primary principle that in writing a novel in the third person, the right to know everything about the characters is assumed and granted. Yes, there are plenty of these lapses in a very great book,—though from laziness, fear of convention or ignorance of artistic canons, the whole truth has not been set down in print. But does it, or rather should it, materially change our estimate of this giant of the mid-Victorian period? By no means. Incidentally, it should serve to stop the silly comparison set up between Dickens and Thackeray, as if the sins of omission and commission were all on one side. The truth is that both these major men wrote at a time and under such conditions as to make a more careless

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technic than that of to-day inevitable; of the two, Dickens worked harder at his craft to perfect himself therein, than his rival. On the other hand, Thackeray doubtless possessed a finer sense of style. But the outstanding consideration is that neither is to be judged by his shortcomings. The world remembers and loves Dickens for his great comic creations, Pecksniff, Micawber, Sarah Gamp, and a host more; and treasures Thackeray for the superb chapter in *Esmond* where Henry returns from the war to his dear mistress, that "rapture of reconciliation"; or for the death of that stainless gentleman, Colonel Newcome; or for Becky for the nonce admiring her husband as he floors the evil Steyne. This duo of English immortals are given their very high and sure place, not because they avoided mistakes, which, being human they did not; but rather for the good and sufficient reason that they *did* things, and mighty big, fine things at that. Let it not be forgotten that to be good, in life, literature, and religion is not alone to obey a series of sacred Don'ts, but to do something to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind.

It hardly needs to be said that this is no argument against striving for perfection — in literature or out of it. Our ideals should express that which at present eludes our grasp, hovering ever before us, to lure us forward to better and better achievement. Otherwise, in Browning's words, "what's a heaven for?"

But it is a frank recognition of what must become apparent to all who think and grow as they live, that to

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blunder is but to confess oneself human, and the vaunted sageness of the years will at the best but mitigate the mishaps and mistakes. If mortals did not err, the divine prerogative of forgiveness were taken from the creator.

"It's a mad world, my masters," cries Shakspeare, with all this in mind. And Lamb the beloved, in that deep-hearted, merry, tender essay of his, "All Fools' Day," was of this mood when he said: "I venerate an honest obliquity of understanding. The more laughable blunders a man shall commit in your company, the more tests he giveth you that he will not betray or overreach you." And a little beyond he adds that "he who hath not a dram of folly in his mixture, hath pounds of much worse matter in his composition."

It is well to think of ourselves, blunderers born and bred under high heaven, in the spirit voiced in that peerless couplet out of "Cymbeline":

Golden lads and girls all must,  
Like chimney sweepers, come to dust.



## Gadding About

UNDER the ban of the climate of the Northwest, and in the quasi-spring, humanity gives way to a "rage of traveling," as Emerson calls it. It is natural enough to shy away from that season which, on some days we are forced to feel, possesses all the vices of both winter and summer, with the virtues of neither. Lucky is the man or woman, we cry, who can fly to the outlands, bask in tempered ocean breezes, play outdoor games, and see and smell the prodigal flowerings that go with those more genial zones, at a time when some of us, less favored, are getting a new sense of the difference between climate and weather.

"Happy mortal, whose purse and business allow him such hieing away to new fields and pastures green," is the cry of the stay-at-homes. "Let him who may, go gadding about."

Yet, be it spoken for the comfort of those same less fortunate folk, as well as in the interests of truth, it is possible to form an uneasy habit of going for its own sake, and travel has its dangers, even as its delights. Emerson gave forth of his wisdom upon this, in the essay on "Self-Reliance": "It is for want of self-

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culture that the idol of Traveling, the idol of Italy, of England, of Egypt, remains for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination, did so, not by rambling round creation as a moth round a lamp but by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours, we feel that duty is our place, and that the merry-men of circumstance should follow as they may. The soul is no traveler; the wise man stays at home with the soul, and, when his duties call him from his house or into foreign lands, he is at home still, and is not gadding abroad from himself."

The time of year, the geography of your habitat and your state of health will doubtless condition the acceptance of these words, but that they contain a piece of truth, the thoughtful will concede. There are many good things beyond the horizon, let us grant; but after all, to try to run away from oneself is like that other unsuccessful attempt, the trying to lift oneself by the bootstraps. *Coelum non animus*, declares Horace: we change our skies, but not our dispositions, when we cross the seas to other lands.

This tendency to gad about betwixt seasons, however, is not confined to the inhabitants of the Northwest, or to any other section of this vast panorama of states. The American as a type is a ubiquitous, un-easy person. Indeed, is not his British parent — how much longer can that phrase be used, when we are so fast assimilating fifty nations in the native Melting

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Pot — proverbially a globe-trotter? So that we naturally enough take after our sire, adding perhaps an extra volatility and velocity of our own. Whatever the origin of this instinct to move and to change,— climate, the settlement of a new country with its demands for pioneer and emigrant, shifting home and fresh enterprise, or something in the blood by inheritance,— behold the American, by nature, practice, and desire, galloping about the globe, at home in all countries, even his own, which it is said the cosmopolite should be, here to-day and gone to-morrow, or, at best, the day after; and using in the transit the swiftest method of locomotion known: the motor car now, the aërial car, it may be, to-morrow. We talk of time fleeing; it is the American that flees, while Father Time sits by and grimly watches this flitting phantom of mortal haste.

The American likes short-cuts and quick circuits. He is a little impatient of slow-and-sure as a motto and method. He wishes to get to his destination by the most expeditious route, and, on arrival, to see all there is to see in half a day, where other stupid nationalities put in a week over it; and to be off to the next point of interest, there, as before, to lead the procession and push sight-seeing through by daylight. Have you not, judicious reader, sat in a foreign gallery and felt suddenly apologetic that you had brooded half an hour before some masterpiece, because there swept by a group of resolute, buoyant, still pursuing fellow-citizens of the Great Republic, who literally never stopped at all:

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merely slowed up in front of a Raphael or nudged elbows when a Van Dyck was reached? They had heard of him before. But art is long, and luncheon is near. Onward!

Something of this seems to get into our business now and again, as the very existence of such a title as "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford" suggests; and into our endeavor, too, in the arts and letters. The American yields to no one in invention, deft skill of handling, sympathetic sensitiveness to life and impressionistic response to its many motives. But he is so anxious to finish his job, and begin another one, that his particular temptation is to scamp his work. And no one can scrutinize present-day literature for the purpose of an open-minded comparison of English and American productions, without being forced to the conclusion that, in the matter of thoroughness and well-turned art, our kinsmen overseas are easily our superiors.

This is all the more to be deplored, in that it does not mean inferiority of gift or less of aptitude; rather, I fear, does it imply a certain inability of the mind to stay put long enough to do a thing well, just as the body seems unable to stay put in one place, and so is forever traveling, gadding about. In art, some of the latest manifestations are plainly, among other things, the result of a purpose to dodge work, to get to an effect at a jump, and without the slow, steady, devoted labor which properly underlies all genuine artistic performance. It is the Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford idea

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again, translated into the realm of Beauty. In contrast, the Greeks had patience; and they rule the centuries. There is no short-cut to artistic perfection, any more than there is to heaven; you have got to work for both.

Here, as in all things, the golden mean is the guide. Never to leave home for rest and refreshment, or that storing and stimulation of the mind which is culture, would be silly indeed. To go for the sake of keeping in motion, is foolishness, a pitiable confession of weakness and lack of self-resource. Similarly, it is well to be alert, to finish a task with despatch; even to perceive a joke the same day it is told.

Artemus Ward, it may be recalled, on the occasion of his first London lecture, informed his audience that citizens who did not understand his witticisms might wait upon him the next morning and have them explained; and the report is that some trusting mortals came. Quickness is all right in its place, but thoroughness is essential to character; and the gadding about of either mind or body should not be suffered to injure the home-keeping habit, without which there can be no progress in the arts of civilization.

## And Others

WE all know the familiar words: "Messrs. Brown, Black, and White,—and others," The "others" mean that, though they belong in a general way in the same classification with the gentlemen named, they are too inconspicuous for particular mention, and therefore can be lumped under an all-inclusive and convenient phrase.

"Others!" Into that category fall the vast majority of human beings; in it, we, you and I, must find ourselves some time, somewhere; and surely, sooner or later, by the turn of Fate's wheel, no matter what our success or eminence or merit, we must take our place with the "others," and be content not to be named with the shining few who stand for the rest of us, and so are emphasized. Nor, to be frank, is it altogether pleasant to be set down thus with the outsiders, the undistinguished herd; respectable, to be sure,—for we are at least present among the guests,—but hopelessly ordinary, merely one of a number. Many a secret heartburn is due to this cause; to meet it with a smile without, and philosophic content within, is a severe test of character and a spiritual victory, when the feeling is conquered.

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There are a few comforting reflections for the "others," nor is their case so bad, after all, when it is clearly observed. For one thing, the selection of the distinguished few, over against the nameless "others," is a very fallible proceeding indeed, continually corrected by time, and often guided by tests that are not at all the tests of real merit or service. Wire-pulling may have forced those names into undeserved prominence; a *quid pro quo* secret trade may be behind it, or yet again a mere stupid mistake. Perhaps it is so evident that one omitted name overtops all that are mentioned, that a reading of the list is provocative of ironic amusement on the part of all competent to pass judgment.

Think, O ye "others," hungry for a little appreciative recognition, how many of the greatest of earth have been pushed scornfully or unwittingly into the same nameless class by shortsighted contemporary opinion. Nothing in social history is truer than that the first shall be last, and the last first. Epictetus the slave does not look like a philosopher, nor does it seem probable that Beau Brummel will die in a garret. It may be rather cold comfort to be told that, after death, your name will be sure to have an individual flavor, although now it is insignificant; but remembering that he laughs best who laughs last, it should breed tolerance and good nature. You, for instance, have not worked underground and grubbily to escape from the company of your brothers uncatalogued; you have not stooped

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to any underhand action, neither bribed nor begged nor slandered; and the thought is as a tonic in the blood.

Think, too, how much you escape by your inconspicuity. Your time is much more your own, you are far more independent, less a slave than if a horde of selfseekers disguised under the name of friends and acquaintances was pestering your every step, and leaving no moment you could fairly call your private possession. The penalty of prominence is publicity, among other drawbacks, and while it looks attractive from afar, perhaps, nearer seen, it turns out to be mostly envy, irritation, and the wrong sort of excitement. Safely ensconced with the "others," you can live an existence full of peace if not excitement, and find plenty of agreeable companionship freed of some at least of the strut and strain to be seen where "Brown" and "Black" and "White"—those symbols of eminence—walk up and down.

Nor should you undervalue yourself and your kind. Truth to tell, it is the "others" who do most of the world's work, and without them society would promptly collapse. Thinkers like Carlyle have from time to time cried up the mighty few who are the natural rulers, and justify mankind to itself; but to represent these occasional giants as if they alone meant progress, social evolution, is a notion both false and vicious. No, the sound, democratic doctrine is that human society is upbuilt as is the coral reef: to-wit, by uncounted slow accretions, each contributing of his



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best, all uniting to make what is truly expressive of the whole race of coral-workers. And for how long that work was carried on beneath the water, unseen yet ever going on, and some day sure to emerge from the surface and take the eye with its white wonder of beauty!

The older way of writing history was to give emphasis to a few outstanding events and personages. Green and the modern historians have shown us that the true story of the English race, or any other, is the story of the unsensational yet deeply interesting development of the common people, as they have gradually learned to coöperate and combine and so better the general conditions of men. It is an important and lovable part of the human family we belong to, we "others," and there should be pride in the thought, not shame. "Brown" may be a loud-mouthed parvenu, "Black" as bad in hue as his name implies, and "White" a whited sepulcher, for all we know.

Hidden among the "others" may be found, if but we seek diligently, virtues like diamonds unmined, and pearls such as the sea is loath to let go. Often does it happen that the philosopher, disillusioned of those in high places, finds his recompense in contact with the poor and humble and seemingly ungifted sons of men.

And after all is said, the facts stare us in the face, and we must make the best of them. Mathematically stated, it is one chance in ten for any of us to get out of the class of "others," and legitimate as it may be to

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try honorably to enter the more select list, to break our hearts over the failure is foolishness raised to the *n*th. Life, in all that makes it most worth while, still stretches before us, if we remain with the general, and it is extremely likely that our ego could not have a more needed lesson than this gentle reminder to go back where we belong, and forgather with the numerous good fellows there to be found. If we form the habit of thinking of others rather than ourselves, it may well be that in losing our life we may find it; in any case, peace and contentment will wait upon our days. If we stop trying to get to the goal so feverishly, the miracle of the goal approaching us may be witnessed. And before we realize it, we "others" may be dignified as individuals in lists of honor, respected for our humility and real worth.

Yet, come to think of it, Messrs. "Brown," "Black," and "White" are taking an unpleasant duty off our hands; somebody has to undergo the discomfort of appearances, and it has fallen to them. While they are bowing, and scraping, and making set speeches, let us go skating, or fishing, as the season bids, while we remember that it is the daily, homely joys and comforts which make life endurable, and even dear.

## The Selfishness of Youth

**I**T is the common observation that youth is selfish, while maturity waxes ever more considerate toward others. Altruism grows with the years, and what is at first the instinctive desire for enjoyment, with a heedless disregard of the rights of fellow-man, becomes, as time chastens the natural impulses and widens the experience, a wise and beautiful subordination of the ego to the general welfare. We do not blame this early centering in self, because we remember ourselves in it, and understand that, normally, life will correct the tendency and bring the individual to a broader comprehension of relative values. Life, innocently, to the child is a game of grab; to the seasoned soul, it is a game of self-surrender for the sake of those we love.

To the thoughtful mind, as it scrutinizes men and women and gets an ever clearer idea of what life is, comes, recurrently, a thought which is not without its disturbing power. We see how often there is a wide divergence between protestation and performance, between motive and deed. We realize that people talk duty, when they mean desire; that a purpose quite selfish, upon analysis, lies beneath the vaunted accomplishment. In short, that the difference between

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youth and maturity is not that of selfishness and unselfishness, but rather that between honest, unconcealed action that roots in a self-regarding impulse, and the action which, equally self-regarding, masks itself under an avowed high motive. There is just enough disillusionment in watching human affairs to suggest this solution to any one who thinks.

If this were so, without reservation, then all humanity would be selfish, and the scales would tip in favor of the young. For there is something refreshing in the blunt honesty with which sweet sixteen expresses an uncomplimentary opinion about you, and the superb directness wherewith a lad of ten will make no pretense of interest when you in nowise can contribute to his happiness. You are simply ignored, your value is nil and you are made to know it. "If one of us would get out of this swing," said the small boy to his sister, "there would be more room for me."

There is a sort of tonic in this treatment after the flattery of false friends and the obliquities of polite usage. And when youth does like you, and shows it, the compliment is immense and you trust it as you do the liking of a dog, in whose affection there is no shadow of turning. Honesty is always admirable, never more so than here. This thought, that mankind has a reprehensible way of cloaking its pleasures and passions under the smug name of virtue, duty and the like, is handled with brilliant satiric force, and more than a modicum of truth, by Bernard Shaw, who

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would have the race begin upon the firm underpinning of reality and honest dealing with itself.

No one among recent writers has seen this contrast between protestation and action more clearly than John Morley. In his "Compromises" he points out how innumerable are the evils brought upon mankind by the failure of apparent virtue to be more than apparent, by our readiness to adopt the forms of conventional righteousness in order to cover our real thoughts. It reminds us of the baptism of the Germanic invaders of the Roman Empire, who, devoutly accepting the rites of Christianity, went on doing exactly as before, with the comfortable assurance that they were now defenders of the true faith.

To assume that this is a complete statement of the case is to do a real injustice to our common human nature. Man does gain with the years, unless he makes a moral wreck of his opportunities, or is fatally handicapped by heredity and environment. The deepest meaning of life is to be found in the general spectacle of human beings, gradually, with many set-backs and disasters not a few, evolving into altruism, humanitarianism, and brother-love. The rascals of the world, to be sure, will continue to hide behind alleged lofty purposes; but their action in so doing would have no significance, were the earth not full of others whose profession and practice are not two, but one; and who have in some measure learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

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The disturbing thought may serve its purpose, all the same, if only, by looking at childhood, our admiration for its natural honesty and openness be quickened, and we make new resolve to be more frank in our methods, and less subservient to conventional indirections. If straight dealings, beyond the limit of politeness, be refreshing in a child, maybe a little of it in a man, even if it lay him open to the charge of being brusque and blunt, might not be amiss. It is a wholesome thing, and quite this side of morbidity, for a person to challenge his own motives, in order that he may avoid that pitfall of the inner life, self-congratulation over an imagined spiritual victory which, closer seen, turns out to be but cloaked enjoyment of the ego. Even in those moments when we believe we feel

Through all this fleshly dress,  
Bright shoots of everlastingness,

in the great words of Vaughan, let us be sure we are not titillating to our own histrionism.

The child is beyond any question selfish, but not with that ominous form of selfishness which means that life has been lived to no avail. While as modern folk we can no longer accept the Wordsworthian view that

Trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home,

but must rather assume the evolutionary theory as applied to man's spiritual growth, and declare that

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maturity is further along the way toward Bunyan's "Heavenly City" than mere untried, instinctive youth, we can nevertheless get a needed lesson from the child's plain dealing and strive to put it into practice in our commerce with the sophisticated grown-ups of our daily meeting. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" has its application here as elsewhere. How fine—to say nothing about how effective—it would be, never to protest a noble motive, but to go about our business doing the best we can, and keeping our mouth shut as to the aim behind the act.

Is there any type of human being you more admire than he who, quietly, without parade, and intent upon duty, leaves his work to speak for itself? If he be not the Overman, he is well along toward him, and welcome wherever met. "The gentleman doth protest too much." Ah, how we do ever suspect him, feeling that words are cheap and works dear. And so the selfishness of youth becomes at once an object-lesson in the dangerous and the desirable.

## Criticism and Cant

**T**WO distinct and several kinds of folk are frequently confused in the public mind. On the one hand is the type of man who, with the sincerest desire to make his town, his state, his country, or his time advance in the essentials of civilization, animadvert against whatever holds back the better day. For the very reason that his motive is so patriotic and pure, he does not hesitate to denounce and warn and cry up the worthy though unpopular thing. And he is quite likely to be disliked by his fellow-man, especially if his manner be aggressive and his urgency steady.

Socrates was this sort of man, and who can doubt that the Athenian, walking downtown of a morning, in the year 410 B. C., did not enjoy being buttonholed by the sage; who fired questions at him after the Socratic method, and would not let him pass on to where business waited or Lesbia, perchance, smiled. The value of this worker-for-the-general-good is seen clearer in the perspective of time than at close range; and his attraction often is inversely according to the square of the distance we stand from him.

The other type, with mouth awry and eye scornful, damns the present and defies the past, which is always



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golden to his vision, in sad contrast with the dull, leaden-colored now. And he does this, not from any sincere conviction but because he wins thereby a certain reputation as a wiseacre; and when he opens his mouth, let no dog bark. Instead of drawing attention to remediable evils and suggesting the way out of the woods, his *ipse dixit* is hurled indiscriminately about on all sides. He takes intense joy in inditing alarmist articles, and is never so happy as when he can convey the idea that the distance between us and the "demnition bow-wows" is but a brief and easy step, and one we are sure to take. Muckraking is his daily food, and a prediction of a Wall Street panic is to him as a beverage. There are always weather omens in his mind which justify pessimism with regard to the crops. And after the most heart-warming and artistic entertainment you ever attended, he is ready with his sneering qualifier. The wonder of it all is, that while he is not loved, indeed, is not seldom secretly abhorred, he fools a great many into listening to him with considerable respect, and is beyond doubt responsible for many a baseless fear and many an abandoned enterprise, so true is it that an effect of wisdom can be gained by this utterly spurious, cheap, and obvious method. And it may be feared that centuries will pass before we reach the enlightened view which will ride him out of town or kill him at the public expense.

The thing most to be regretted is the confusion to which I draw attention. It would seem as if no two

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creatures were more unlike than the worker for the common weal and the worker for himself, yet the former has to assume vicariously the sins of the other more than half the time, and the run of mankind exhibits a curious purblindness to the world-wide difference between the twain. The critic, in the noble and true sense, is believed to be a critic in the sense that censoriousness is a principle of his mind and a preference of his heart. Criticism, which properly means a winnowing out of precious grain from much chaff, always with the purpose of pointing out the good, is interpreted to mean envy, hatred and all uncharitableness. And one is not deemed a critic by the ignorant, unless he be possessed of a strong, vitriolic faculty which he must employ liberally when "passing upon his subject."

Hard as this is upon our worthy friend,—the man who would help and has the courage of his convictions,—it is far more disastrous for the society which breeds both these types. For by failing to see them apart, not distinguishing between a friend and an enemy, society blocks the work, destructive and constructive, which denotes two aspects of the same spirit of helpfulness. It is just as patriotic to attack a bad thing as it is to build a good thing; in fact, it often happens that only by pulling down the one can the other be put up. Destruction, then construction, is the logical order of progress. The clergyman blamed for the many things he had given up as unbelievable sensibly replied that

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he had got rid of them in order to have room for the big, vital things he did believe.

When James Russell Lowell returned from his British ministry, he wrote certain essays and otherwise expressed his opinion on democracy. The gist of his views was that democratic methods and ideals were still on trial in this land, and by no means was the victory won, or even the theory justified. Whereupon he was promptly assailed by newspapers of a sort, cried out upon as a traitor to American principles and made the object of much more cheap rodomontade of that kind. As a matter of fact, he was doing us a great service,— a first-class mind, fresh from a valuable experience which had enabled him to make comparisons, giving his country the benefit of thought all the more welcome because, perhaps, not soothing to the national vanity, which is always ready to blind itself to its own good.

In the same fashion, it will be remembered how the late Charles Eliot Norton made himself immensely unpopular throughout the land, in certain circles, by his fearless condemnation of our policy in the matter of the Philippines. The fact that we may have disagreed with him personally should blind no American to the truth that such a man was doing his land a service quite commensurate with that of any soldier on the belted field; a service, moreover, taking courage of a higher sort. Very few are the men who respect and follow the still, small voice rather than popular ac-

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claim. It were far easier for the Lowells and Nortons, and also far more cowardly, to enjoy their old age in supine selfishness, instead of speaking the brave, ringing words intended to awaken the public conscience. It will be a happy day for any country when such men are appreciated in their motives, and can count on the esteem which is not the object of their endeavor but the accompaniment of their words and their deeds.

The final thought, then, is the desirability of discrimination between types whose resemblance is but superficial, their difference deep. Let us refrain from applying the vulgar word, "knocker," to one who is a patriot in disguise, and be clear-eyed to pick out the other fellow: the man of venom and egotism and self-aggrandizement. For always and ever is he an enemy of the people. It was not Dr. Stockman, in Ibsen's play, who was the enemy, but all the folk who decried him and tried to drive him forth from among men. They, who were too timorous and self-seeking to reform their city, yet heaped opprobrium upon him who would do it for them. Society was its own enemy in turning to rend him.

## Uncivil Service

**I**NCIVILITY is not a proof of sound Americanism. Yet often the treatment received by perfectly innocuous patrons of this, that, or the other would seem to imply that it is derogatory to the dignity of an official to reply in pleasant terms with the deportment adopted by respectable society, and that common politeness is a flaw in patriotism.

The underling, in proportion to the degree he is under, seems to feel he should make up for his small salary by using the methods of the hold-up man. His offense begins in the fact that, if you have the misfortune to belong to his sex, he refuses, whatever the temptation, to glance your way. His answers are mouthed into the desk before him, or directed jauntily toward the passer-by in the street. This ruffles you slightly, perhaps; but more is to follow. His enunciation is imperfect, and when, through necessity, you request him to repeat the garbled information, fuel is added to the flame of suppressed wrath with which he endures your presence. His intonation is on that dead level of protest or sinking note of despair which leads you to apologize for the fact that your blood is still circulating.

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You are half-minded to offer him a loan of a thousand or so, in order to see if the blandishment would relieve the icy constraint of temporary association with one so far beneath him. But a wiser thought reminds you that he is as much beyond pecuniary lure as he is impervious to human cajolery. There is in civilization to-day — so obviously a misnomer in the premises — no sterner test of one's self-esteem than to confront this type of fellow-American, and leave the one-sided battle with a remnant of *amour propre* left to use next time.

But let us be just. Should you meet this awful creature in his own house, surrounded by his Lares and Penates, you would find him almost human, a man even capable of waxing amiable in the bosom of his family. It doesn't seem so, yet it may well be. No sentient thing could be as morose and cantankerous steadily as he is when you have the ill-luck to consult him about a time-table, or a theater ticket or a post-office technicality. He must thaw out and look cheerful at dinner, say, or of a Sunday afternoon, when his wife's relatives do not come to call, and he strolls out with his comely spouse in her very becoming new hat. It may be that his office gloom and aloofness are the reflex of, or natural reaction from, his household charm. If so, congratulations go to his wife and children. Here is another kind of double life, and the difference between a Sunday-school superintendent and a yeggman is no greater than that between our official

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friend at home and abroad. The reflection softens our dislike a little, but only a little.

Wonder is begotten when we reflect that the concern for which this ruffian works appears to be perfectly satisfied with his activities. Else why employ him? He continues to hold down his job, and his neckties are more flamboyant the longer you perforce seek his advice. He has every appearance of prosperity. You know, theoretically, that no one on earth could receive a large wage for such a caricature of service; yet there he is, gaining flesh, and stout to resist all attempts to mold him into the semblance even of decency.

If it ever happen that you miss him at the receipt of custom, you have an instinct of exultation in the thought that maybe he has been removed by the hand of fate, and will no longer make the approach to pleasure or business a horror that beggars description. But not at all; the chances are that he has been promoted, and become the "man higher up." Of course, you wish he were still higher, so high as to be forevermore invisible. But that is your eccentricity, not his fault.

The saddest part of it is that this savage, pressed into public service when every outraged instinct in him cries for steady occupation as a thug, plumes himself, as was hinted, on what he supposes to be his American spirit and style.

Frankly, his kind is not met in European lands,—

## Uncivil Service

except as an anomaly that, upon protest, will be quickly given its quietus. The untraveled citizen of this mighty republic when abroad — with a few other titles understood — is at first amazed when, upon asking some necessary query, the reply comes back in courteous, well-modulated language, and the person speaking evinces seemingly a desire to expedite your affairs, and if he can only legitimately do so, acquire some of your cash. The traveler, wiping the mist from his eyes, remembers that the companion of this well-bred servant of the public at home takes your money as a personal insult, and suggests, by manner and facial expression, that you have not come by it honestly.

Indeed, I have seen Americans, encountering this gentleman-like behavior on the part of one who traditionally in the land of the free has the habit of accommodating you at the point of a gun, knocking you down, in the language of Kipling's Mulholland, before he "led you up to grace," become at once suspicious of the individual, vaguely uneasy, because a lifetime of manhandling had left the recipients dazed in the face of the manners of Lord Chesterfield in a commercial connection.

It is only the "slick citizen," runs the thought of the American abroad, who can afford such manners; he needs it in his business. What a shame it is to make the American flag sponsor for a boor! How salutary to suggest, in every possible way, that good



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manners facilitate business, and that the carriage of a gentleman does not imply putting on airs, or a suspicious past. The thought underlying the daily ruffianism of cheap officials everywhere is that, by an exhibition of their quality, they convey the idea that they are as good as anybody else,—and a trifle better. They are aware that the one intolerable thing from the viewpoint of an American is any concession that a human being of whatsoever sort or description is their superior. It is their touching faith that all men are born and continue to be free and equal. They do not know that the French phrase "liberty, equality, and fraternity" has been long since defined as a "dream between two lies."

They have much to learn.

Pessimism, however, is not necessary. The official manners are growing better, not worse. Not seldom nowadays you meet a clerk at the counter or a theater box-office man who, hard worked and put upon as he so often is, preserves all the outward signs of gentle breeding. Long life to him, for his advent means an advance in civilization! It is to our common interest to eliminate the other, older kind, the pirate in disguise. We are making strides forward in the matter of government civil service; attention should also be given to uncivil service in our business life, private as well as public.

## The Individual and Society

THE helpless gregariousness of people who sit about in overlighted, stuffy rooms at summer resorts, languidly listening to, or taking part in, the aimless talk that can be called conversation only by courtesy, illustrates a deep-seated human tendency. Such folk seem to prefer to pass an evening in that fashion, rather than to be alone or to commune with Nature, or to read a good book. "Anybody for company" appears to be their motto. They have a fairly pathetic desire to get with their kind, if only to feel the warmth of human contact and to escape from their own vacuity.

The instinct for getting together is of immense value and makes modern society, in the broad sense, the significant phenomenon it is. This is altogether desirable, and, rightly applied, means coöperation, the union that is strength. It fortifies the aims and ideals of the individual so as to help in self-development and alleviate the loneliness which otherwise might lay a chill hand on personal endeavor and paralyze worthy action.

Even when we are enjoying our own society intensely, we have the feeling so felicitously described

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by Stevenson in the inimitable "Travels with a Donkey." Camping out at night in the pine woods of France and reveling in the beauties of the moonlit scene, he suddenly wished for a dear companion to share it with him. "And to live out-of-doors with the woman one loves is, of all lives, the most complete and free," he declares.

The extension in our time of the associative principle has given us labor unions on the one hand, and trusts on the other, with all the good — we are not for the moment concerned with the bad — to be connoted by these names. The vague wish to touch elbows with other mortals, whether in some vacation idling, at the club, playhouse, political meeting, synagogue or market place, can be relied on to be an element whenever or wherever men and women meet. Deprive some one of this opportunity to forgather and swap the news, and you see at once what an exaggerated, even hectic, influence a mere footprint in the sand becomes. The history of the world is changed by the stimulus to human thoughts and deeds due to this get-together instinct.

At the same time it can be abused, this associative desire, and the ease with which in these latter days one can escape from oneself may breed a kind of person whose individuality is ironed out into a pat conformity with custom and convention. Such a person hardly knows himself in any true sense.

He takes his thought, language, dress, deportment

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and general social conduct from the common center which seems to be the pooled result of social stimulation and attrition. Beyond the discussion of the weather, every word that issues from his mouth is second hand, and an act independent of social approval would be as objectionable as a surgical operation. The new terrifies, as such; the old, similarly, is valid in his eyes, not because of its rightness but because of its ancientness.

There can be no question that a certain cast of mind is peculiarly prone to look at the world in this way, and is more than a product of environment, for the hen-minded personality doubtless antedates society itself and has a place, sane if obscure, in the large purposes of creation. The penalty man pays for the privileges of the social — and how many and dear they are! — is the loss of the outstanding personality, the occasional meteor that flits by erratically among the ordered, calculable courses of the other stars. Perhaps the price may not be too high when the benefits are considered: all the difference between the primitive state of Nature and the complex and impressive spectacle of a modern society.

But it is true as well that we need the individualistic, and one of the dangers of the day is such a rubbing down of the qualities natural to a man in the fierce attrition of life as shall take from him his salient traits, the things that make him distinctive. Occasionally, still, you meet a person whom you de-

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clare to be a "character," a man "with the bark on," in Frederick Remington's piquant phrase.

What do you mean in so designating him? Simply that such a person is not like everybody else, as most of us are: dares to pursue his idiosyncrasies, to be himself even if so doing runs counter to the prevalent mode. How many of us, for example, fellow-men, really have the social courage to wear a collar or a necktie that is distinctly out of date, though it cost quite enough and is in an excellent state of preservation? Or how many women have sufficient individuality to adopt a coiffure really becoming to the shape of their heads, in spite of the current fashion which caricatures beauty?

The matter of small talk offers a specially apt illustration. Few indeed are those who, on meeting another human being for the first time, have the backbone to dodge the stereotyped bromidic observations about the weather in order to get at something worth while! This usual beginning seems as inevitable as the portico to a Greek temple. But the man I am thinking of does not conform in these matters, sees no reason why he should, does not allow himself to be drawn into the silly, sheeplike imitations which obsess the majority of earth's inhabitants. He is frank, direct, simple. If he makes a social *faux pas*, it does not worry him and, as like as not, he is not aware of it. There is a refreshing unconventionality in his speech and garb; instead of waiting to note what

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others may do in a given case, he acts on his own, as the English say, and he possesses a sort of innate dignity that saves him from being ridiculous, and commands our respect.

It is one of the great lessons of life to learn to strike a happy mean between these two extremes: to preserve one's individuality, yet get the good that is to be found in the social relations with our fellows, without posing as an eccentric or losing identity in the crowd. The danger of the former is obvious and therefore less yielded to than is the temptation to merge personality in a constant mingling with others. For the fullest and freest expression of oneself, the conformity should be external more than internal. Our manners should be those of polite society, but our opinions our own; to reverse this, and make our manners our own and our opinions those of others, is to be an empty-headed boor. Our age is commonly called an individualistic one, and certainly there is much in its literature and art to give plausibility to the idea. But that is only one aspect of so complex a time. Just as truly, ours is a social age and it is safe to say that never has there been a stronger pressure upon the individual to make him a part of that social solidity which means civilization. One who is wise will thus cherish his ego, yet remember that he who loseth his life shall find it.





## **Art and Letters**





## The Holiness of Beauty

**D**AVID bids us worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The lovely words are vibrant in our ears, for all the world loves the good, though it may not follow it; and this is as true of "the po' lost sheep of the sheepfol'" as it is of the saints of the synagogue. Crooks and thugs, harlots and thieves pay tribute in their very vocabulary to virtue as the supreme, beautiful, and desirable thing: they speak of "a straight man," "a square man"; they say "he's on the level." We hear of honor among thieves; the hypocrisy of a Pecksniff is his acknowledgment of the ineffable worth of the Good. This splendid passage from The Wisdom of Solomon sums up the feeling: "For in the memory of virtue is immortality; because it is recognized both before God and before man; when it is present men imitate it, and they long after it when it is departed; and throughout all time it marcheth crowned in triumph, victorious in the strife for the prizes that are undefiled."

Equally true with the beauty of holiness is the holiness of beauty. Sidney Lanier in our own time gave eloquent expression to the thought which is a return to the teaching of Ruskin and Emerson and Plato.

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Here are Lanier's words: "Let any sculptor hew us out the most ravishing combination of tender curve and spheric softness that ever stood for woman; yet if the lip have a certain fullness that hints of the flesh, if the brow be insincere, if in the minutest particular the physical beauty suggests a moral ugliness, that sculptor, unless he be portraying a moral ugliness for a moral purpose, may as well give over his marble for paving-stones. Time, whose judgments are inexorably moral, will not accept his work. For, indeed, we may say that he who has not yet perceived how artistic beauty and moral beauty are convergent lines which run back into a common ideal origin, and who therefore is not afire with moral beauty just as with artistic beauty, that he, in short, who has not come to that stage of quiet and eternal frenzy in which the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty mean one thing, burn as one fire, shine as one light within him; he is not yet the great artist."

Every sincere literary worker feels this, and in his heart of hearts has a religious regard and respect for what he would do. Our finest critic of poetry, the late E. C. Stedman, says that the idealist's recognition of the relations of beauty and truth "is a kind of natural piety, and renders the labor of the poet or other artist of the beautiful a proper form of worship."

Yet this truth has been largely forgotten, or consciously set aside in our day. As literature was pro-

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duced, became self-conscious and developed what is called criticism, there arose a theory which separated the beauty that is spiritual from that which is artistic: in other words, esthetic beauty. And the cleavage has become so distinct that in some cases we mark the complete divorcement of those sister-like beauties which, in the language of Tennyson, "never can be sundered without tears."

The esthete declares that the only beauty he knows and cares about is that of form. Whistler vents the remark that such sentiments as love, patriotism, and religion have nothing to do with art, which is a matter exclusively of form and color. Oscar Wilde, as if trying to show the principle in its *reductio ad absurdum*, says that a color-sense is more important to the human race than a sense of right and wrong. And Zola declares that the only morality he as a writer recognizes is the morality of the fine phrase. These three utterances, from three men of genius of our day, strikingly illustrate the divorce of esthetics and ethics. But surely this severance is unnatural. And, as surely, it has done harm. For what is beauty in the broad sense? Is not its guiding principle symmetry, harmony? And this is the same principle which runs not alone through all the arts and literature to give them validity, but also through human conduct and throughout the physical universe.

The kiss of word and word, which we call rhyme in poetry, is a vocal agreement or harmony; the

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makeup of a sonata or symphony is the harmonious arrangement of parts; and what the painter calls his "composition" is the same thing,—the harmonious disposition of details to secure a pleasing effect of unity. And in the world of physical fact equally, a sense of the evolutionary unity of life thrills us with the thought of the majestic harmony of agreement, con dovetailing with con, and star saluting star in the great rhythm of space and time. Even so in the human body, the systole and diastole of the heart, in tireless iteration, are a symbol of the movement, universal and everlasting, which is in all things and makes life possible. It is because of the verity of this universal principle of creation that it is no mere figure of speech to speak of the music of the spheres. Recall Shakspeare's description of music in "The Merchant of Venice":

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims.

It is time for the recognition of the essential bond between these sisters, divinely derived and unhappily sundered, whose mighty mission to the world is properly one, as the poet and philosopher never tire of telling. We should reunite the members of the family and be present as assisting parties at the reestablishment of a kin-tie after foolish estrangement. Criticism and commonsense can clasp hands here. There are signs which point to the broader conception of art

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which sees that, to be worthy, it must express the spirit, the soul of man, as well as his sense pleasures.

Because the holiness of beauty is as true as the beauty of holiness, we find an explanation of the fact that the Bible, apart from being the authoritative guide for conduct, is the greatest work in English literature; and this, despite the other fact that it is a collection of writings out of three foreign tongues, Englished for us in incomparable form in the time of the first Stuart sovereign. It is the one series of writings gathered into a volume which unites with a matchless felicity of expression a steady spiritual purpose and ideal; it is this which makes it unique, since no such claim can be set up for Shakspeare or any other of the major English writers,—even for Milton, lofty and pure as he is. The Bible is an object-lesson for the idea that the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty are but phases of one cosmic principle. And with the advantage given us by this clearer, broader realization of the significance of the Book of Books, we are studying and enjoying it with more fruitful results than ever before; seeing it as a Book of power and beauty as well as truth, recognizing that none of these attributes is contradictory of the other.

## Hide and Seek with Romance

**G**EORGE MOORE, in one of those intimate moments when he reveals himself as an acute and most suggestive essayist, declares that he feels according to his temperament but acts according to his looks. Those who know his physiognomy will get the full force of his remark.

How true it is that we hide our burning romanticism under a deadly cloak of convention! Ashamed of the poetry in us, we talk prose, look it, dress it. The New Englander's understatement, the canny Scotchman's caution, the matter-of-factness of the Philistine, are, I believe, the mere hiding of the romance that is in us all. George Moore is known to the world as the sternest, most uncompromising of realists; and, in the expressive idiom of the day, he looks the part. But touches there are in his fiction and essays which reveal another G. M.,—the Moore who is perhaps the deepest expression of his personality: the shy poet, masking behind the purveyor of crass reality.

In the same way that arch iconoclast, Bernard Shaw, has flashes of poetry in his plays that are all the more startling because they come from the author of "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

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Yes, and we all play hide and seek with romance, the elusive, shy, fawnlike thing that is yet never far away, easily sought, and loved, though in secret, of us all. It is a strange characteristic of man that he is so prone to disavow this tendency in himself: covering up his sense of poetry with the commonplace, and always denying, with a Peter-like repetition, the desire for beauty that is so inextricably interwoven with the warp and woof of his being.

A New Englander hates to call a lake anything but a pond, for fear he will be caught napping as a suspect on the charge of sentimentality; and the westerner, instead of waxing rosy in speech over the loveliness of woman, remarks laconically that she is "some girl" or "easy to look at."

To explain this avoidance of ostensible romance on the part of many is business for the philosopher: to recognize it is but to gaze at the human show.

The joke of it is, that if you will only watch this same practical citizen, you shall find him constantly doing things in a kind of shamefaced way, which plainly announces his liking for romance. He will, on the sly, consume hectic fiction that grossly violates the sane conventions, reveling in battle, murder and sudden death, and issue refreshed from this tonic contact with the sensational, Stevenson's "penny dreadful and twopence colored." See him at the playhouse and observe how he will patronize the crude melodramas, and insure long runs for them, under the same secret



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urge of poetry, romance, the imaginative exhibition of the world's more exciting aspects. Nor have we noticed that in the even tenor of business such folk refrain from plunging and chance-taking, which increases the tempo of the game; while in a motor-car they prefer on general principles to exceed the speed limit, adding thus a dare-devil touch to the experience, when there is no hurry at all.

Perhaps romance would not be true to its name if it did not dodge in and out of our lives in this way, and were not wooed inconstantly and without formal acknowledgment on our part. It may be that its innocent illicitness is a factor in its charm. George Moore, no doubt, wishes he were as romantic as he feels; and the romantic feeling may be all the stronger in his breast for the very reason that the world at large does not suspect it, and credits him, indeed, with another view. Stevenson, in that charming essay of his, "Lantern Bearers," tells how he and other Scotch lads, on the windy links o' nights, hid the lanterns under their jackets and only revealed momentarily a flash to a passing comrade, as a shibboleth and shining symbol of brotherhood. The boys represented mankind and the lantern was the quenchless note of romance. They were playing hide and seek with it there by the sounding sea, as we all are beside the sea of life, whose everlasting cadences whisper of the higher destiny and the undying hope.

The suspicion of romance, or the attempt to dis-

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claim it on the part of the millions who really are eager for it, arises from its abuse: from the many false and silly things associated with it and the foolish excesses committed in its fair name. Romance, properly, is not sentimentality nor pose nor affectation of any sort; it does not mean extravagance in speech, dress or behavior, nor is it the enemy of common-sense.

It is rather the wish, or, better, the instinct for the livelier and lovelier manifestations of life in contrast with the dead-and-alive and drab-hued nothing-doing which at times seems to descend upon us like a fog, squelching zeal, paralyzing action, and putting a quietus upon joy.

We all meet these desert places upon the journey, and when the oasis is glimpsed, how welcome its green glint and the promise of shade beside the cool water! Even if it turn out a mirage, many would prefer to have that instead of the ceaseless stretch of sand; and so they seize on pleasant lies in art and literature and the theater. But this is foolish, because the price you pay is too big: disillusion when the mirage fades and the desert march becomes the more intolerable. But this explains how fervently the false substitutes for romance,—the pseudo-art of every kind,—are grasped as one grasps a friend's hand, though it prove a foe's.

Let us at least remember how universal is the romantic appeal (whatever form it take), and not

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despise any honest movement toward it. The fakirs who use it to their own advantage should be sternly handled, but their sins never charged up to that which they are discrediting. Even as breathing is an instinctive art of physical self-preservation, so is the aspiration (note the etymology which signifies breath) toward beauty an instinct for psychic self-preservation, and the two are equally legitimate.

The person who does not breathe deeper in the presence of romance is in danger of a spiritual smothering and should forthwith begin to doctor the lungs of his soul. If not a steady, open commerce with so dear an experience, then let it be hide and seek. Nor should we play the game half-heartedly, but lustily, for all it and we are worth. For, curiously, the response will be swift and sure. Others who dare not, timid souls that they are, will applaud the more adventurous; in other words, will buy your pictures or books, listen to your music, attend your plays, swear by you as a man and a brother. He who makes romance can count upon a following. He is doing our work for us, vicariously, and we are willing to pay the price. A kind of virtue issues from his very presence.

## An Old Dictionary: A Reverie .

**W**HAT more jejune for the subject of a reverie! And yet it appeals clamorously to my sentiment, and you, dear reader, shall know why, and be the arbiter of my mood.

Imprimis, 't is a copy of John Walker's *Pronouncing Dictionary*,—and there is magic for me in the very name: on the face of it, I grant you, almost as unpoetic as Smith, or Brown or Robinson of humdrum connotation. But softly! Do you remember the delightful scene in Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, where dear old Scrooge, metamorphosed by the kindly coming of the ghosts, pokes his time-worn poll out of the window on Christmas morning and inquires of a street urchin if he knows the whereabouts of a certain poulterer's; and upon getting an affirmative, bids the boy cut away and buy a turkey that shall take the town with wonder for its size; and how the gamin emits the one word of rapturous agnostic wonder: "Walker!"

I recall how as a boy myself — was it longer ago than yesterday? — I reveled in this full-mouthed, suggestive exclamation. I had no notion of what it meant, but it was deeply satisfying. And not all my

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commerce with dictionaries since, has quite dulled the romance that is forever associated in my mind with that moment of the imagination, that irreverent invocation of an august lexicographer! It illuminated the need of literature in a hard world of fact; it justifies John Walker's existence. The knowledge, later acquired, that Walker's was at the time a name to conjure with in the ways of scholarship, has its main use in the light it throws upon this scene out of Dickens, mighty master of life.

The date of my copy is 1833; the publishers, Scott & Webster (successors to Mr. Dove,—fancy a bookman of the delectable name of Dove!), 36 Charter House Square, London. Dear me, Charter House Square! At once I am off on a tangent,—one of those criss-cross paths of the imagination which somehow allure me more than the straight and proper thoroughfares of thought—my mind full of the singing memories of sundry Charter House schoolboys: Lovelace and Addison, and Steele (dear Dick!), and Thackeray and John Wesley—Heavens, what a crew! Publishers who dwell in Charter House Square should think twice ere they put their imprint upon an avowedly dry-as-dust volume like a dictionary; 't is provocative of dreams, not etymologies.

The manner of title of the book has a certain pathos; I find myself sentimental over it. 'T is so perilously long. That comfortable stagecoach time (the iron horse had not yet begun to snort and cavort

## An Old Dictionary: A Revery

up and down the land) was not unwilling to read its titles long instead of clear: "A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary and Expositor of the English Language, in which not only the meaning of every word is clearly explained, and the sound"—but no, gentle reader, 't will not do; 't is a little essay in itself, and mine must be nothing more. Suffice it for you to know that there are just two hundred and seventy-one words in this entitular address, as it befits to call it. I may add here that the book is bound in plain gray-brown boards, with a green back and white slip cover, a very pleasant unobtrusive dress; and is, though somewhat battered without, interiorly in wondrous good condition, handled, I dare avouch, in its earlier days, by one gentle born, whose hands touched even a dictionary with cleanly respect and due courtesy. Which leads me to name another cause for sentiment. The fly leaf of the volume (which I acquired second-hand, — the sympathetic reader may have deduced so much) bears the inscription: "Deborah Thidd, 3rd month, 1834." Lovely name and lovely thought,—a woman, a vestal and a Quaker! The cup of my joy here spills over. There is no one else in all the generation past I should prefer as joint-owner of the precious volume. (Observe, reader, that I do not say *former owner*; nay, that were formal, most unfriendly to the winsome shade of Deborah, whom I love in all respect and tenderness.) Does any hold that Thidd is a name uneuphonious, unideal? To him

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I simply say: "Good sir, you make the woeful error to detach the Thidd from that dear, quaint old appellation of Deborah, with all its captivating associations of militant righteousness and Puritan fair-maidenhood. Taken together, Deborah Thidd is adorable; even conceding that Thidd alone gives one pause. Matthew Arnold, you will remember, hurls the arrow of his wingèd satire at a certain wretched female yclept Wragg. True, 't is a horrid thing; but its horror inheres in the absence of any sex-revealing and softening baptismal name as prefix to Wragg. Her penchant for crime (if memory serves, she killed her child) seeks an explanation no further afield.

As I lingeringly turn over the pages of my time-stained Walker, I hold a sort of spiritual communion with the fair Deborah; for fair she was, reader, I am forever convinced. I have sought eagerly yet patiently through its double rows of words (there are nigh six hundred pages) for some mark, some comment, some memorandum or marginal token of use; but alas, none sullies the volume's virginal white. 'T would have been (for me) a dramatic event in the calendar of sentiment had any such been found. I should have deemed it a personal communication from Deborah, almost a love letter. But it consoles me to reflect that 't was not in consonance with her nice Quaker way to smirch or deface a book, even by the fine delicate lines her high-bred hand would indubitably have traced upon its surface. I have some-

## An Old Dictionary: A Revery

times wondered that Charles Lamb, with his familiar liking for the Quakers, should have had that incorrigible habit of side-lining and commentarizing in his beloved quartos; but then, he loved books even beyond Quakers; yea, I doubt not, beyond that fair-haired Quakeress immortalized as Hester. Perhaps it had been otherwise, had he known my Deborah.

Did you note that Deborah acquired the volume in the third month, in March? That month of hurly-burly, of bluster, bleakness and blow, has little of magic association for us Americans. But the English March is like our April, a season of mild skies, green-ing buds, and a wild hint of coming flowers. So that in imagination I see my dear Quakeress walking across spring fields (she did not set down her habitat in the book, hence my assumption of a country residence, or at least, a suburban, is altogether justified); the dictionary, neatly done up in blue-gray paper, tucked primly under arm. To look at it and her, you would have believed (with the March odors in your nostrils, mind you) that 't was a book of lyrics,—Keats or Shelley, may be,—young men but recently perished in their prime. Or,—ah, it is a thought haply congruous with my vision of Deborah,—it might be taken for a copy of the *Essays of Elia*, purchased the very year of his death, 1834, the date when Deborah writ her name in Walker and made herself known to me, and through me, I trust, to a few others. But no, in the very teeth of vernal invitation, she



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wends homeward in the company not of the elect of literature, but of one Walker, grave purveyor of verbs and nouns, and suchlike remnants of learning. Surely, it becomes plain our Deborah was fain to be nice in her speech uses and would make no slip in spelling, even in the fervor of Love's most compulsive epistles; hence her burden of dictionary, that far-away but still fragrant morn of March.

J. Walker, albeit a good scholar, paid the penalty all scholarship must render Time: his tome (worthy monument of his day) is long since superseded. For my daily work I must turn to other men. But he stands on my shelf within hand-reach, an honored guest, a tried friend. I love to have him hard by. If he satisfies not my head, he does my heart, and that after all is more important. What is knowledge compared with the undertow of the emotions? He comes like a faint sweet breath out of the dusty past, and brings, like a bit of arbutus from the spring woods, a thought of my co-heir forever in his outworn wisdom, the unknown, the treasured Quaker,— even Deborah Thidd!

## Beauty and Sorrow

**I** DO not wish to see it or hear it, it is so sad; there is enough sadness in life, without reproducing it in art and literature,"—how often one hears the protest. And how true it would be, if the arts did naught else but repeat the misery, reminding man of his inevitable unhappiness, just when he would turn away from reality to art, in order to forget it for the nonce. But that is not what true art does or ever has done. It seizes on the sorrow which is in life, mitigates it, explains it, makes it, like the one discordant note in concerted music, to blend with all the instruments into a total and richer harmony.

The truth is that in art, if you make sorrow beautiful, you offer consolation. Edward Fitzgerald had a sense of this when he wrote to a friend concerning his as yet unpublished translation of Omar Khayyam: "It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of most thinking men's minds; and made music of." As who should say, the music justifies it. So Dante, too, in his telling to Virgil of the loves of Paolo and Francesca, that twain as piteous as the other twain, Romeo and Juliet, speaks of their love

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time as the time of the beautiful sighings; how the Italian draws out the thought and caresses it,

*Al tempo de' dolci sospiri,*

— and Wordsworth signifies his recognition of the law that the sweetest has inevitably a flavor of melancholy in writing the familiar words:

*In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind;*

— while Keats, the beloved, high priest of Beauty, if one such there be in English song, knowing well that if you but make sorrow beautiful and set it to music, you pluck out its sting, cries:

*Ay, in the very temple of delight  
Veiled melancholy has her sovran shrine.*

And so, once more, the beauty that is in great tragedy is to be explained by its harmonious relation to spiritual experience. If the pain which comes from our perception of the dissonance between life as we know it and life as we might imagine it to be, plucked of the pain, be only mitigated by a feeling that in the fleeting vision lies promise of ultimate good when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," then the sorrow becomes sweet indeed. Hence the thoughtful suggestiveness of the definition of beauty as "a promise of happiness."

And so it is in life, even as in the great literature which reflects life. My friend writes me but yester-

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day of facing her first Christmas with the beloved gone; it was an unspeakable sorrow, says she, but not too great, for it was "a sweet sorrow." What an acknowledgment, this, that life was widened, enriched, solemnized, and transfigured by Love's deepening through the loss of the loved one!

There is a deep instinct, after all, behind and under the demand for a so-called "happy ending" to play, story or poem, in the literature which depicts life. Not because of the desire, merchant-wise, to supply an unthinking request for pleasure at the expense of all truth for the symmetrical verisimilitude of sound art; but rather because the human mind naturally reaches out to the end, through intervening discouragements, as hope sees beyond the storm clouds of a wild day the ineffable soft dove colors of sunset and afterglow. The mind needs, and hence demands, that final compensation to balance the composition and read the riddle plain. A quatrain from the old German lyrist, Günther, is a hope, and more than a hope,—a prescient belief that bespeaks him no less man than poet:

Der Anfang unser reine Liebe  
Ist Unruh, Unglück, Hohn und Pein;  
Das Mittel ist nicht mindre Trübe;  
Doch soll das Ende lustig sein.

Ah, till the end of all Time toil-worn and pain-riven mortals will murmur those words, "Yet shall the ending happy be," and find in the utterance a com-

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fort that transcends all the process of ratiocination.

This mission of art to make sorrow beautiful and explicable, perhaps the highest service it can perform for mankind since sorrow is of the very texture of life, is the sufficient answer to the intellectual babes-in-arms who cry out for only what they are pleased to call the "pleasant" in literature, and shrink from Æschylus, Shakspeare, Balzac, and Ibsen when they would grapple with our souls, purging them, in the Aristotelian sense, of the dross and purifying them through the exercise of pity and terror. But often this noble and hence legitimate use of the sad is changed to an exhibition of the dark and dreary aspects of mankind and the lives they live, because of the sensational nature of the appeal; or as expressive of a mood of pessimism and revolt; sometimes, it would seem, merely for misery's sake. All sane-minded persons are right in the instinct to turn from this and to protest against it. In intention and effect, it is no more like the other high and holy handling of life's disharmonies than a sneak thief is like Prometheus filching fire from heaven to give it to men for their everlasting weal.

Moreover, the test is simple, a subjective one depending upon the effect of what is read upon the reader. How does the poem or drama or novel leave you? Calmed, braced, broadened, solemnized,—any or all of these? After it, is there a clear realization of the laws that govern living and the love that sweetens it? Then was the tragic presentment worth while,

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and not otherwise. You have melted "into an ancient woe," nor lost your time. You have listened to advantage to "The still, sad music of humanity." You have been made to realize that "Evil is the soul's misuse of means." Sophocles' "Oedipus," Shakspeare's "Lear," Tolstoi's "Resurrection" are all tragedies, delineations of human suffering and human wrong. But they are alike in leaving you better prepared to play your part, helped in the homely but divine business of daily living.

The trouble with much modern literature of the false-tragic sort is not only that it lacks hope, but also proportion and love. It is disproportionate in its emphasis upon a part of the picture, instead of upon the whole. And it lacks love for the reason that the writer is not sympathetically implicated in the fate of his characters, but, more like a scientist than a literary creator, stands coldly aloof, to watch the psychological sequences of cause and effect. Art will never be science till, as Kipling has it, "earth's last picture is painted." Nor will the literature which comes out of life be fully justified until it gives back to life an interpretation thereof that aids man to be wise, just, loving and obedient.

## On Being "Natural"

**H**OW often you hear the remark concerning some distinguished player, "Oh, he does not really act, you know; he is just himself on the stage!" The person who understands the technic of the profession, and, more broadly, has given thought to the underlying principles of all art, will secretly smile when such opinion is vented. For he is well aware that if the actor did merely reproduce himself as he is off the stage, he would be hopelessly ineffective. Players like Maude Adams, Ethel Barrymore, John Drew, and William Gillette, who seem, in the parlance of the day, to be giving imitations of themselves, and nothing more, are as likely as not envisaging character and departing, by all the difference between art and life, from what would be their private personality. It is true that personality shines through the work; and in this they differ from the so-called character actor who completely merges his external appearance in his part, which from its nature allows him to do so.

It is a matter of fact that the other's problem is a harder one: in spite of the lack of disguise, to convey a sense of fictive character and to denote it by other more hidden means than that of makeup and

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costume. Partridge, in Fielding's novel, it will be recalled, when he was taken to the theater to hear Garrick, could see nothing in the little man who only did what anybody would do under the circumstances. This was an unconscious tribute to the great English player.

The point is that being "natural" on the stage is being artificial in a way to simulate life,—in reality making use of an enlargement of life which is totally different from life itself. Being "natural," in other words, is seeming natural, a vastly different thing, and the legitimate business of art always and ever: seeming-true, verisimilitude—that is the magic word—the shibboleth of the histrio, and of all artists, whatever be their medium of expression. And this difference between art and life is a thing little realized by the Anglo-Saxon mind, practical as it is, and not over-interested in the affairs of artistic representation. No American actor more exquisitely illustrated the natural method of impersonation than the late Joseph Jefferson. Luckily, the present generation of playgoers was brought up on him and can appreciate the reference. And yet, as William Winter says in his admirable life of the great comedian, that which came to the auditor's ear as a sigh, left the actor's lips as a cry: the artificial heightening of effect, necessary to carry to the last seat of the theater, was there steadily, and had to be there, to secure the desired result.

The difference between good and bad stage art, be-





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tween a Jefferson and one of the Bulls of Bashan who bellow forth their lines and throw the whole picture out of focus, is that, while both are trying to do the same thing, one is doing it by artistic, cunningly concealed methods, the other by methods disgustingly unconcealed. In the same way the platform speaker who knows his business and proposes to use the modern realistic technic, strives for an effect of colloquial, off-hand utterance which nevertheless differs, as the earth from the heavens, from the conversational tone of life. To prove this, listen to a tyro who mounts the rostrum and endeavors to chat familiarly with an audience, as he would with two or three friends in private; you are sorry for that man, and still more sorry for his hearers. Indeed, he becomes ridiculous.

There is a law of the platform as inexorable as that of gravitation: in proportion as his audience increases in size, must the speaker enlarge all his method: his voice must become more orotund, his diction change to ampler rhythm, his gestures, so far as he makes any, be accommodated to the larger space through which they must travel. What would be just right for a hundred people becomes painfully inadequate for a thousand; and if five thousand be present, there is as much difference, in the technical demand, from the audience half the size, as there would be between that and the small audience first assumed. These secrets of the charnel-house do not need to be realized, of course, by those in front. But it is perhaps well that

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the difficulties be occasionally brought to mind, in order to give a more intelligent comprehension of all art. The important principle, universally applicable, is that it would not be art did it not differ from life. And whenever that remark is made, intended as a criticism, with regard to the actor walking through his rôle, we may safely say two things about it: that it is an unintended and naïf compliment; and that it also is an exposure of the speaker's complacent ignorance of the very elements of all good art.

I remember that Sir Thomas Browne, in one of his essays, holds forth on the thought that God, since he has created a beautiful universe, is a great artist. And he pens this sentence: "Art is the perfection of Nature," meaning by perfection the perfecting of what is offered in the natural world. It is a deep saying by the seventeenth century essayist. In a single, brief sentence he tells the whole story so often lost sight of in modern criticism. That is just what art is, and therein lies its difference from the natural. It is not mere reproduction of things in the world; it is representation, or presenting again, and with a change. The change, the difference, involves greater symmetry, the exclusion of all that is irrelevant and not significant, a clearer bringing out of the meaning of it all: that meaning which, in life itself, is often so misunderstood, so sadly beriddled and obscure.

In other words, it is the business of art to make us see life with new eyes, see it mayhap for the first time,

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because we have been so immersed in its tangle and stunned by its discordant noises as never before to have stopped, listened and understood. Watts's female figure in his great picture, "Hope," is shown with bandaged eyes, bending down to her harp, breathlessly listening; to what? Surely, to that inner harmony of things which unlocks the secret of a world. Going about our business day by day, we hear it not; neither the still, small voice within, nor the supernal music ever sounding for us if only we have ears to hear and can shut out the harsh sounds that circle us in life. And along comes art to do us this service: to show us perfect shapes where we see distortion; to strike rich chords of music, where for the most part our ears are assaulted by mundane jars and shrieks and whinings; to set down sweet, high things in books, when the language of the street is mostly hieroglyphics; and to send, as if from heaven itself, a promise of perfection upon the myriad imperfections of earth.

Wise is he who sees that this is being more than "natural," and that the divinity of art lies in the difference.

## The Author as Citizen

**I**N the "Letters of George Meredith" we find that great Victorian author refusing a newspaper interviewer with the remark that, in his opinion, the public has no business with the private and personal affairs of writers, save "as they are reputedly good citizens."

The words are significant, especially as they are squarely opposed to the current theory. Meredith believed and meant to say that an author's private life is in a sense the public's, because there is an obligation upon him to make his life square with his work. By implication he would contend that a bad personal reputation would injure the work in so far as it did not correspond with the writer's professional and public utterances: a knowledge by the reader of the disparity between work and life leading to disillusionment and consequent failure of effect.

This sounds very homely and old-fashioned, but is all the more needed for that reason. It is of considerable significance that a confessed giant of nineteenth century English literature should have felt this way. The doctrine of the complete divorcement of work from life, of art from moral obligation, is vastly pop-

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ular of late years. It has become somewhat quaint to suggest that a great writer should be a decent man; that his audience has a right to expect him to have some sense of *noblesse oblige*. It was taken as a matter of course in earlier days, when authors like Dickens, Reade, and Kingsley in England, or Longfellow, Whittier, and Holmes in America would have been astonished if anybody had argued with them that the reading public had neither rights nor interest in their personal conduct. The elder school of American writers has won its present position in part because as a group it represented ideals of conduct and character, as well as accomplishment in letters.

But we have changed all that. To be degenerate is now one way of setting up a claim to originality,—as if it were not more original to be good than bad; if you doubt it, consult statistics. And any notion that a genius should obey the laws that alone make society possible is smiled at as too puerile to discuss. Genius is insanity, cries Nordau, why then expect it to be other than irregular! How preciously worth while the evil course of life of this poet, says a distinguished critic, when it gave us such and such a sonnet!

The latter-day criers-up of moral irresponsibility should be a little less loud-mouthed and arrogant; before assuming that their contention is right, and the Meredithian view antique and wrong, they might at least first furnish us with the demonstration of the practical results of their theory: give us authors who

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swear by the new creed and give the world books of anything like equal caliber with the despised elders who were so naïf as actually to think there was a connection between a man's way of living and the expression of himself and his experience in life which we call literature. Contribution against contribution, the comparison should have a rather sobering effect upon the advocates of go-as-you-please ethics.

The complete fallacy in the idea that the two can be or should be severed may be stated in this way: man, generically, is a morally responsible being. That basal fact was settled some time ago, and remains placidly unshaken by all the parlor pseudo-philosophers and posing perverts from Adam to annihilation. And an author is nothing more nor less than man, writing. Ergo, since the greater contains the less, inasmuch as the human race, whether it pleases particular members thereof or not, comes and must come under the moral law, any attempt to exempt the author from human responsibility is futile, silly and fatuously illogical. The author must pay the penalty, as well as enter on the privilege, of being a human being in his art, quite as truly as he must in his life. He does not cease to be the one when he becomes the other. To dodge this plain fact is to move in the direction of vain striving, repulsive excesses and false thinking.

It is really extraordinary, nevertheless, how many folk seem impatient to-day, in print or out of it, at any apparent restraint (as they term it) upon the personal

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action of those who influence the world through the spoken and written word. "Let them give us worthy work," they shout, "and that is all we have a right to ask; anything more is impertinent meddling." This would be not only plausible but convincing if only one could dispossess one's mind of the very modern reflection that each man (including all writers) is a part of the social body, and that nothing is surer than that we may not live apart and unto ourselves alone, being rather members of the one great body, which sensitively feels the action of each in the life of all. The notion that the genius may, like Dundreary's bird, go and flock all by himself in a corner, does not belong in the twentieth century, but savors of the Dark Ages. The only excuse for a man to make a hermit of himself, either mentally or physically, in this enlightened time, be he prince, poet or peasant, is the affliction of some disease of the mind or body which makes him objectionable to his fellow men.

Independence of soul, freedom in expressing one's views and conclusions, is of the very essence of character, and to demand of the writer that he tamely submit to the opinions of others and make of himself a sort of household pet, instead of the voice of one crying in the wilderness, were of all things most foolish; it would eviscerate letters and leave only imitation and milk-and-water amusement. The trouble only begins when the author takes advantage of the liberty properly granted to him that he may say his say without fear or

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favor and, declaring himself practically outside and beyond all law and order, substitutes license for liberty and the untrammelled presentation of eccentricity and degeneracy for a sane handling of life.

The fact is, we incline in this day of individualism to talk too much about rights and too little about duties, which are as closely associated with the former as a man's shadow with his body. There is a good philosophical argument for the contention that, strictly speaking, no such things as "rights" exist. What we mean by the word is that, in the evolution of society, social thought comes to see that by granting certain privileges to the individual he will evolve the better, it will be to his advantage, and therefore make for the general weal as well. In other words, a right is an ethical concession made by society upon the basis of an altruistic sentiment and commonsense. Whether there be a "natural right," in the usual meaning of the phrase, may well be debated, if not doubted: for example, woman's rights. But no, I have registered a vow in heaven to leave that theme alone!



## The California Mission Play

ONE of the most interesting and significant of American dramas has come out of California life. I refer to the so-called mission play, given with marked success for ten weeks during the summer of 1912 at San Gabriel, a few miles outside of Pasadena. The drama is the work of John S. McGroarty, a Los Angeles editor and historian, who has long studied the state annals.

A little group of enthusiasts, fired by the thought of an impressive pageant play which should tell the story of the founding of the Spanish missions along the beautiful southern coast, banded themselves together to make the dream a reality. Just across the way from the quaint old mission church which tourists visit as a matter of course, they erected a unique theater building in the mission style to house the idea; and there at last, to the sound of a great bell hung from the dark rafters stained to suggest the past, the superb tapestried curtain, set in a great gilt frame as if it were some rich old medieval picture, parted and the audience saw the blue Pacific, with a jutting headland on the horizon and sundry lazing Spanish soldiers in

## **The California Mission Play**

the foreground. It was a scene finely suggesting the picturesqueness of the vanished years.

The play is cast in three acts, and the central figure is Father Junipero, the pioneer priest leader of the wonderful early work. For two acts he is before the spectator: first at False Bay in 1769, in the days when he was striving, with intense religious fervor, to convert the native Indians. The half-starved Spaniards of the expedition are deaf to his passionate pleading that they remain until his mission be accomplished. The governor, Don Gaspar de Portola, has gone to Monterey for help; he returns with his troopers nearly dead from privations. The priest begs them not to go back to Mexico, and just as he seems to fail, the relief ship, sharp limned against the sunset, rounds Point Loma; Junipero's prayer is answered. It makes a splendid stage picture for the first-act curtain.

In act second we are within the walls of the mission of San Carlos; a generation has passed, and Father Junipero is an old, white-haired man. To him flock the padres from the other missions scattered up and down the California shore; he has seen the travail of his soul and is satisfied; for, as one after the other makes his report, we hear of Indians christianized by the thousands, where before not a single baptism had occurred. After the reports there is merry-making; Indians and Spaniards dance and sing their typical songs. And with Junipero's prayer for the welfare of the mission long after he has departed, which must

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*in our life and death. It is a charming scene full of beauty, truth, and love,—though far less dramatic than the previous one.*

The final stage of the story is enacted at the ruined mission of San Juan Capistrano in the year 1847. The padres are dead, their work is forgotten: an old Mexican caretaker guards the place for the Americans, and the gaunt Indians in the desert dare hardly approach it. A beautiful Spanish señora, type of the old régime, enters, rebukes the present greed that profanes God's temple, and says a sad farewell to the past:

"Farewell, dear place. Sleep well, ye tender dead padres, my countrymen. No more thy feet shall come again. Fallen is the altar, and the roof is in the dust. San Juan of God, farewell."

While the tragic poetry, the wistful, backward-looking pathos of this last picture is undeniable, dramatically it is weak; and a serious artistic blemish in the piece as a whole lies in the elimination of the central personage, Junipero, whose career binds together two-thirds of the play. Even in an historical pageant this jars one's sense of unity. The change, too, to the melancholy, at times bitter, note of protest is a questionable shift of key, and the introduction of a miracle—the sudden illumination of a golden cup set upon an altar after the manner of the Holy Grail—again suggests an appeal less broadly sympathetic than that of the preceding acts.

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But one prefers to dwell upon the excellencies of both play and performance, which are many. The parts of Junipero and the señora are admirably handled by C. H. Horning and Lilian Burkhardt, and the subsidiary characters are all acted in a way to produce any exceptional *ensemble* effect. But the dominant memory is of the wonderfully effective groupings and massings whereby broad pictures are given, ever recomposing, yet never at loose ends. About three hundred people are so manipulated that no one appears supernumerary, but rather each becomes an organic part of the composition. Richard Mansfield, Henry Irving, or Beerbohm Tree at their best never surpassed these California players in this respect, so vital to the success of a spectacle. The credit for this handling of a mob is due to Mr. Horning, while the scenic side is the work of Henry Kabierske.

Between the acts, curtains are drawn covering apertures at the sides of the theater, and through these one walks out to a path which circles the building, and displays models of all the missions, with their dates given, against a painted background of mountain and sky. Seen from within the darkened auditorium, the loopholes make a perfect illusion, one in tone with the subject-matter on the stage.

I saw the play twice, the second time at the last *matinée* of the season, when the large house held twenty-five hundred people. So great has been the success of the venture this year that the drama will

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again be given daily, and the intent is to make it a permanent entertainment. While I do not doubt that it would win plaudits anywhere, there is a peculiar fitness in continuing it at San Gabriel, so rich in Spanish memories, amid a setting in harmony with its sentiment and story.

Such a pageant play is more than amusement. In producing it, California, with her unexcelled opportunities for historic pageantry, has placed it with such other pageants in this country as those of Gloucester, Peterborough, and Chicago, notifying the American public that it is as yet hardly awake to the fine possibilities of utilizing native history in memorial scenic, musical, and dramatic forms, in suchwise as to illuminate the dry annals of the past droned over in school, and so to stimulate patriotism in the younger generation. It is hardly too much to say that the state of California could afford to pay the entrance fee to this mission play for all the children of the commonwealth, for the sake of its influence in fostering intelligent citizenship. When a more enlightened view of the theater, and of education in general, prevails, such expenditures will be a matter of course.

Surely here is one of the pleasant signs of the day: history and religion brought home to the multitude through scene and act. It made me realize anew the power of the play when, as in the elder days, it was devoted to the noblest themes and was openly aimed at the souls of men.

### **A Remark of Hazlitt's**

**W**ILLIAM HAZLITT, in one of his essays, dilates upon the superficial treatment of character on the stage, compared with character as it is delineated in fiction. "The stage," he says, "shows us the masks of men, and the pageant of the world; books let us into their souls and lay open to us the secrets of our own."

Hazlitt, mighty book lover that he was, and having his own time in mind, was quite justified in the remark. Yet it is the distinction of the new era in drama to out-date his view, because the stage has now, for a generation, been drawing human beings and presenting them with more and more of the care and faithful transcription of truth which formerly were the peculiar province of that other form of story-telling which we commonly call fiction.

Little by little, the drama has striven for a more truthful picture of life, and has gradually tried to avoid the conventional treatment of men and women which the stern limitation of the theater and a tradition which placed plot before characterization have imposed upon the playmaker. Such dramatists to-day as Pinero and Jones, Barrie, Shaw, Galsworthy and Bennett, to name

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but a conspicuous few, have limned human beings with a fidelity to the facts such as was unknown fifty years ago.

Plot has been subordinated to this purpose of revealing character, and so teaching the world of spectators with regard to the great fundamental laws of social life. The individual's relation to society, society's effect upon the individual, the rights, duties, obligations and dangers of the person in his relation to others in the social complex: to portray these have become the aim and ambition of our best and most representative dramatists. Their function has been taken more seriously than ever before, and the drama resulting, while it may have sometimes sacrificed something of the pleasurable-ness of the picture, has thereby gained in depth, and breadth, and serious meaning. It is this new seriousness of purpose, this attempt to interpret with truthfulness character in its relation to society, which is the essential stamp of the drama of to-day.

It must not be lost sight of, however, that the inevitable restrictions of the stage, whereupon a piece of life has to be exhibited in about two hours' time, whereas a novel can in leisurely fashion trace through six or seven hundred pages the minutiae of the interactions of a group of lives, cannot do, and never will, what fiction can, in the subtle analysis of motives, impulses, and thoughts. The drama means action above all else, as the etymology of the word shows. Therefore, in the main, character must be shown in its external indica-

## A Remark of Bazlitt's

tions of action, and woe to that playwright, be he Granville Barker or another, who endeavors within his "two hours' traffic of the stage" to present the smaller signs of character differentiation; he must put his finger upon the big things, the things that are characteristic, revelatory, convincing, and leave the other method to be used by the sister form of fiction.

This the audience has a right to demand; and in spite of its increasing willingness to see a finer, more discriminating handling of men and women on the stage, so that the villain is seen to have his good points, and the hero his human failings, any attempt to use a Henry James canvas and paint with a camel's-hair brush is foredoomed to failure and ought to be. The dramatist must not blur his figures, and for him the cardinal virtue is clearness.

Fiction can always say a thing and take it back; not so the play, which must say a thing, say it hard, repeat it, and stick to it. It is good technic in a novel to fool the reader by a surprise at the end; Anna Katherine Green has taken money from us all in that way. But it should not be done on the stage, where the proper method is to let the audience into a secret not yet discovered by the stage people; our pleasure in part comes from our superior knowledge, as we watch to see how the *dramatis personæ* will act when they come to learn what we already know.

With this reservation, we may fairly take pride in the fact that an advance in the drama has largely nulli-



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fied Hazlitt's remark. Using a broader method, and obeying the stage limitations, it is fast furnishing us with portraits of humanity as it is to-day which at the best rival the fine characterizations of fiction. Not merely masks are they, but living souls; and beneath the "pageant of the world," in Hazlitt's phrase, we are able to detect and take pleasure in the recognition of the springs of action and the contours of life.

## Mark Twain

A GREAT humorist is only such when he is more than humorist. He must be a thinker, a moralist, a reformer. Recall Rabelais, Aristophanes, Cervantes, Shakspeare, and Dickens, to see how true it is. Man laughs because, dowered with self-consciousness, he is aware of the tragedy of life with its incongruities, ironies and antinomies, and needs the alleviation of fun, the

Respite, respite and Nepenthe.

The humorist comes to make him smile sympathetically at the foibles of humanity, to satirize folly and fraud, and to remind him of the brotherhood of the race. If he did no more than soothe pain and sorrow, he would be most welcome, his mission salutary; but when the humorist rises to his highest power, he not only smiles away care, but castigates the sinner (Juvenal with his *castigat ridendo*), and while he shakes the midriff with Homeric laughter sweetens the air and the soul of man with charitable thoughts. Every nation, like every man, is known by the company it keeps; if it produces a great humorist, the race is revealed by and in him, because in the mood of play, of fun and laugh-

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ter, one catches it off guard and listens to the very heart-beat of a people.

Mark Twain was intensely modern, democratic, representatively American. To those who knew him personally,—and that privilege was mine for years as his Hartford neighbor,—he was worlds removed from the newspaper funny man. He was no mountebank in motley wear, shaking the fool's zany for the momentary, thoughtless merriment of the crowd, but a wise, sane, deep-souled man teaching us the lesson of life.

Indeed, in private conversation he was the most serious-minded, yes, somber-minded man I have ever known. Certain external denotements were, of course, laugh-provoking: the rich, nasal drawl, the racy idiom that was as natural to him as the drawing of breath. But the mind was ever sober, even solemn. His mind was broad and faced the awful realities of life; his heart was bigger yet, and no man so richly endowed emotionally could snicker over trivialities. That is the first thing to realize about him.

For this reason, his career, splendidly successful as the world rates success, was in a sense tragic. The great reading public and those who did not read, yet to whom his name was a household word, as once were the names of Barnum and Beecher, insisted on taking him as a funny man. He felt that he could hardly get a contemporary hearing for what was in him,—or, at least, for what was deepest. Doubtless, there were elements of his genius which gave some

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ground for this: exaggeration, irreverence, horse play. But to stop there were pitifully to misunderstand the man. Hardly a book of his fails to have an underlying serious purpose, the reformatory instinct, the corrective suggestion. If he made fun of King Arthur's time, he wished to show the false romanticizing over the past and to cry up the present as a better day. If he attacked Christian Science or the Bacon-Shakspeare question, it was not primarily for the sake of ridicule, but to point out what seemed to him the dangerous absurdity of a certain view. It is so throughout his works.

Mark Twain made fun of many things. But of one thing he was as tender as a woman, as loyal as a lover, as delicate as a maid: namely, the good that is in common humanity. The reverence and faith that were royally in his nature were given to this cause, and he wrought for righteousness as he saw it. He hated Sham as the devil hates holy water. This it was which made him so American, and in a true sense a moralist. He was a believer in the dignity and worth of humankind, especially under crude, new-world conditions; in other words, he was in the widest, deepest sense a democrat. Of the people himself, he stood for them, spoke for them, understood and loved them. He was, in this respect, of the lineage of Lincoln. And so, while his method and manner may shock some to whom conventions and traditions are paramount, he never repels us, as does Dean Swift with

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his savage, almost malignant inhumanity, or Bernard Shaw with his arrogant disclaimer of emotional values. One never gets from him

The laugh mistimed in tragic presences,

— there is never bitterness in his mirth. I know that he was in heart a sad man; but whatever the private sorrow, it was not allowed to sour the written word. As a man of letters he had a sense, none keener, of the obligations of art.

Mark Twain was a voluminous writer, a man of perhaps forty books. Naturally, time will slowly decimate the list. But it is not difficult even for a contemporary to see that certain works will be chosen out of his long, toilsome effort to mark his quality. The forms of his work are many, yet at bottom he was an essayist; and travel-sketch, tale, full-length fiction, speech, and historical study were all essay, because they were just Mark Twain talking, revealing beneath this or that veil his striking personality and setting forth, for the benefit of fellow men, the catholic outlook and inlook of a remarkable mind and a generous nature.

Such are the early books, "Roughing It" and "Innocents Abroad"; both, unlike as they seem, do the same service: they reveal the American type under different circumstances, the one in pioneer days on his own soil, the other in a European setting. The American at Home and Abroad might well be the

## Mark Twain

running title. Such also are the two great boy books, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," studies of the American lad in contrasted, primitive habitats and exhibiting him in his habit as he lived in now bygone days. This brace of books, the former largely autobiographic, constitutes the epic of boyhood, the romance and poetry of life, seen through young eyes in surroundings that, to a gentler training, might seem harsh and homely. But what matters that the speech be rustic, that the setting be crude, that the incidents smack of the soil? Life is a precious thing to these lads, and so Huck and Tom will last with the quaint English speech in which they are embalmed, and keep a morning freshness. Nor is there aught higher or harder than this to accomplish in the literary endeavor.

Nor in the category of his best should that beautiful little masterpiece, "The Prince and the Pauper," be forgotten; nor a score of short stories, among which "The Jumping Frog" is a prime favorite, the tale that first gave him fame. Nor can we overlook, among the later works, "Life on the Mississippi," wherein so much of his earlier experience finds graphic reproduction; nor that strange, haunting novel, "Pudd'nhead Wilson," half melodrama, half psychologic romance, and surely one of the finest flowers of his gift. Six or eight books like these, with enough other titles to round out a dozen volumes, will embrace a permanent contribution to American history, to the

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native letters, in truth, to the literature of English speech. The British critics have been inclined to say this, before the American.

Perhaps he repeated himself in his maturest work, at least externally; but there are qualities both of thought and of temperament in the writings of his last years not so fully disclosed in the books that came before. He matured late, and grew mellow, sweeter, more perceptive to the end. In thinking of Mark Twain as a literary force, rather than as a Don Quixote riding atilt against all the windmills of Sham, it must also be borne in mind that, quite aside from humor, much of his writing contains passages of noble prose, that any author would covet to claim. Descriptive pages in "Roughing It" there are, admirable for picturesqueness, melody and masculine grip on the mother tongue. "The Prince and the Pauper" is a most skilful example of tonality, the right key steadily maintained. The boy books, before mentioned, are a veritable treasure house for dialogue, description and dramatic situation. There are scenes, too, in "Pudd'nhead Wilson" unforgettable for reality that is lifted into romance by a poet's touch. Nor does this western American lose strength in foreign parts; every reader familiar with his descriptions of travel must feel that on many a page, Germany, Italy and yet other lands are limned with master strokes. Especially is this true in the delineation of Nature, where often Mark Twain is at his happiest. It was the commonly

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expressed opinion in the old Hartford days—a city then the haunt of writing folk—that here was a wonderful talker, a prose poet in his daily converse. Much of this quality got into his books, although it may be obscured, more 's the pity! in the dominant note of broad Rabelaisian fun.

In the final reckoning of the American men of letters who have honored us by carrying the country's name beyond our borders, but a very few appear to be of assured permanence. We know now that Emerson and Hawthorne are safe to be of the number; that Longfellow and Lowell may be added to the list, and perchance Whitman. That Mark Twain is likely to be of the company, few critics will hesitate to affirm. It is a select gathering, but our master humorist, who taught us to see life with sane vision, to respect our own, and who commanded tears and smiles as only the great men have, for both correction and consolation, will not shame the others. Meanwhile he has sure haven in innumerable human hearts.

To one who remembers him in former days, there is something appropriate in his recent passing. The sometime happy home, sanctified by love and lightened by the laughter of children, had been long since broken by the insatiate years; one by one the dear ones had preceded him "To where beyond these voices there is peace," and as these inevitable changes marred him, and he was left alone and lonesome, a piercing stanza of Wordsworth's has persisted in my mind as



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singularly applicable, felicitous with a strange, sad felicity:

If there be one who need bemoan  
His kindred laid in earth,  
The household hearts that were his own,  
It is the man of mirth.

Yes, Mark Twain had earned his rest, and now he takes it, by the side of his beloved: where, at the last, every man would fain be:

"He loved his fellows and their love was sweet;  
Plant daisies at his head and at his feet."

## The "Antigone" at the Greek Theater

**T**O witness a great Greek tragedy, interpreted by one of the best modern actors, in a Greek theater which is the most perfect reproduction of the ancient model in existence, and in a setting of Nature of such incomparable beauty that Greece itself could not surpass the effect, may be called an unusual experience. That is what I and some six thousand other human beings enjoyed on an evening in June, at Berkeley, California,—an evening so superb that it seemed made expressly for an outdoor performance.

The Greek theater on the campus of the University of California was the gift of William R. Hearst and is a restoration of the theater at Epidaurus dating from the fourth century B. C. It seats eight thousand persons and is built upon a hillside surrounded by a magnificent grove of eucalyptus trees. The stone tiers rise gleamingly in a steep, concentric semicircle; above and back of them is the stately black of the tall tree boles, the susurrus of the branches seeming to make a mystic comment on the scene; while, far overhead, the keen glitter of stars, the wonderful gold stars of California, lights the demi-darkness: a sort of supernal stage setting for the human business below. This site,

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with its marvelous natural attractions, had been used for several years by the student body for their academic gatherings when President Wheeler drew Mrs. Hearst's attention to its fitness for a temple of art which should be a center of University activities. Thereupon, she interested her son in the idea, with the result that he became the donor. Here, every year now since the theater was erected in 1905, admirable student productions of drama or productions by visiting professionals are made: Aristophanes' "The Birds"; Sophocles' "Œdipus"; Racine's "Phèdre"; "As You Like It," with Maude Adams; the morality play, "Everyman," by the original English company, and Stephen Phillips' "Nero" may be mentioned as a few typical performances. The theater is also used for lectures, orchestral concerts and the commencement exercises, its splendid acoustic properties making it an ideal place for all such purposes. When it was empty I stood on the stage and, speaking without the slightest change from a conversational tone, was perfectly understood by a friend in the topmost seat. In this respect is it almost as remarkable as the Mormon tabernacle at Salt Lake City, which, it will be recalled, has the advantage of a roofed auditorium. The influence of such a structure, dedicated to such usages, upon the life of the University, can well be imagined.

As a structure, it consists of the auditorium and the stage built of concrete, raised six feet from the ground, with a broad walk between which accom-

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modates the orchestra. The semicircle of seats measures two hundred and fifty-four feet; the stage is one hundred and thirty-three feet long with a depth of twenty-eight feet; it is austere stripped of scenery, but its massive back wall, representing a palace front and pierced at the center by the great royal door, the entrance for the characters of noble lineage, like the gallery above the Elizabethan stage, constitutes an immensely impressive stage setting. This stage is larger than the classic model, in order that an unobstructed view may be afforded every spectator. In all essentials, however, it is a faithful rendering of that theater of antiquity which Pausanias declared to be the most beautiful in the world, as it is to-day the best preserved.

On the "Antigone" night the handling of lights was very skilful, and I for one shall never forget the effect when, at the drama's beginning, two slaves appeared at the palace door and lighted the altar flame, which then furnished the half-lucent atmosphere for the doomed girl's first entrance. It set the mood at once; back flew the imagination, two thousand years and more; the glory that was Greece resumed its old, imperial sway, and the soul was attuned to the simple, sculpturesque, heroic, tremendous story of a sister's love for a brother and how that love led to many deaths—an elemental tragedy of kin.

So many fascinating questions were raised by the performance of a play hitherto only known by the re-

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readings of many years, that I would fain make a book about it rather than a brief essay. The alleged fatalism of the Greek drama, the use of the chorus, the value of a continuous performance (just two hours and twenty minutes was the playing time, with no modern *entr'acte* breaks), the relative excellence of the ancient heroic and modern psychologic style of acting, the use of melodrama, that is, music-drama, in the strict etymological sense, these and yet other problems vital to the scholar throng the mind. Personally, I was so exalted by this evocation of the Past, that bed seemed an absurdity, and I welcomed an invitation to an after-theater supper in San Francisco with Miss Anglin as hostess, there to thresh out with her, her company, and such persons as George Riddle, who was the actress's right-hand man in the production, Percy MacKaye, and James O'Donnell Bennett, the flocking questions of the play, the eternally alluring matters of art.

But the broader human appeal of the drama and its interpretation by the players, these are, I suppose, of widest interest. The star's work was, it seemed to me, of most remarkable power and loveliness. At times during the evening I caught myself in the query: "Could Rachel have surpassed this?" Miss Anglin from the moment of her first entrance firmly seized the Sophoclean spirit of the thing. She keyed her rendition to that antique austerity of effect, slow-moving, stately, which is of the very essence of Greek

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genius. It was a terribly difficult task for a player whose forte lies in the plastic modulations of modern emotional work, like "Mrs. Dane's Defense," in which I had just seen her. It speaks much for Miss Anglin's art that she could pass from that instantly and speak blank verse poetry with the noble enlargement which properly accompanies the statuesque movement and grave tempo of the Greek drama.

For clarity of utterance and vocalic range and flexibility her voice work was extraordinary: not a word, not a syllable, was lost by the great audience, even a whisper carried. To the heated imagination, it was as if the very stars could hear and vibrate their approval. Nothing on the vocal side was perhaps so unique as her deft adjustment of the speaking voice to certain musical notes sounded by the chorus at recurrent moments, when she not so much spoke as chanted the emotions called forth by the poet's sentiments. Nobly, too, did she envisage the part; not a large woman, she yet conveyed the true heroic idea by sweep of gesture, amplitude of walk, and dignity of carriage. And she so skilfully blended imperious moral indignation with the piteousness of forsaken, doomed girlhood, as to make one hear the flute notes and the trumpet notes, defiance and pathos intermingling, in the character of Antigone.

The support was admirable. Eugene Ormonde, Miss Anglin's leading man for several seasons, played the exceedingly difficult rôle of Creon, the king, in

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a way to bring out clearly his qualities of stiff-necked pride and slow yielding to the teachings of Fate. Specially good was the leader of the chorus, and the messenger was remarkably vocalized by a young player, Eugene Shakspeare, a name which did no violence to the family tradition. The seer Tiresias, in the hands of John R. Crawford, Creon's son, Hæmon, played by Howard Hull, and Ismene, Antigone's sister, by Miss Frances Jordan, were excellent delineations all.

It may be said of the cast, as a whole, that they threw themselves with keen ardor into the spirit of the piece and the occasion, as the star most generously acknowledged. Mendelssohn's lovely music for the "Antigone" was rendered by an orchestra of fifty pieces under the leadership of Dr. Wulle, head of the department of music at the University, and was well handled both by chorus and orchestra. But I for one could not but feel that it was too modern, too romantic for the grand simplicity of the theme, and pulled it in the direction of opera at times; to which may be added that the words of the chorus, so integral a part of the Greek play, the poetico-philosophic comment on the course of the story, a function like that of the Prologue and Epilogue in earlier English drama, were rarely distinguishable. Had they been intoned in unison, it might perhaps have been otherwise.

One opinion I am confirmed in, after hearing the "Antigone": that in every way it is better dramatic

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of life, but strive to render its spirit. But in our day, criticism has tended towards the other view.

Unquestionably, Chaucer's theory would be right if by such changes life were not the better represented. If, for example, the poem or fiction or drama, in showing us men and women in this world, did it so partially or with such distortion as to falsify the essential traits of humanity, it would be a disservice, since the reader would be misled concerning life, and books, instead of helping us to interpret life's meaning, would be a sort of pleasing pabulum, sweet to the taste but bitter in the belly.

Nor can it be denied that much so-called idealistic literature in the past has prettified and emasculated the truth out of all semblance of reality: the dime novel, in its hectic exaggeration of adventure and accident; the love story, by so representing each sex to the other as to hide from both the sane, sweet realities of social intercourse; and the Utopian books which show, not a possibly better state of existence to be attained in time, but an impossible planet governed by laws which never can apply to this particular star of the solar system. The reason why Plato's "Republic" and More's "Utopia" are of permanent importance is because they do not do this, but suggest ideals of state or society which have since been largely incorporated into practical living.

But despite this abuse of fact, it were quite wrong to pass to the other extreme and conclude that sound



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But despite this abuse of fact, it were quite wrong to pass to the other extreme and conclude that sound

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art implies and demands a literal photograph of life. Rather, as Stevenson finely says with fiction in mind, art exists because of its difference from life. He means that, selecting typical things, it eliminates the non-essentials, the myriad confusing and insignificant details, and carefully chooses such traits as properly may stand for the whole; so grading the human phenomena as to give us a sense of the relative values of fact and flesh, brain and soul. First in time, the natural body, then the spiritual body; but in importance, first the spiritual body: that is the law. The value of the flesh, as Browning so nobly and consistently taught, lies not so much in itself as in its necessary uses for the purposes of the spirit.

To illustrate: suppose a novelist desired to draw a human being so that a clear, rounded impression of character might be conveyed. That human being may be supposed to wash his hands three times a day for a lifetime of seventy years; or, say, in round numbers, more than thirty-one thousand times. A novelist who dwelt upon this fact, and threw it into the foreground, would be a fool. Why? Because this reiterated act would have no human significance, would not reveal character in any real sense. One act of self-sacrifice, if the man were noble, one peculation, if he were weak, would outweigh in revelatory value a million hand-washings, worthy as the instinct or habit of personal cleanliness may be in its due place. The illustration is homely, but to the point. The literary artist must

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select and graduate human acts, moods, and thoughts on an ascending scale which begins in protoplasm and ends in the spiritual. To deny this is to make chaos out of psychology and repudiate the validity of the thinking process, ceasing to distinguish between the yelp of the wolf and the hosannah of the redeemed.

And it is in this sense that moral obligation does exist in all art worthy the name. The writer must be held sternly accountable for his representations, nor be allowed to blur boundary lines; all the more so if he possess the genius of a Chaucer, on the principle of *noblesse oblige*. The widespread notion that it is art's affair to show life, and that there its responsibility ends,—“a fine phrase is a good action, I know of no other morality in fiction,” cried Zola, an apostle of the pestilential opposite view,—is unsound in logic and vicious in result. Nor, broadly speaking, and *pace* the mighty shade of Chaucer, has it been the way of the world's truly great and abiding art. It is a theory which, from Homer to Hawthorne, has certainly been more honored in the breach than in the observance.

The Chaucer passage, full of the geniality for which that master of English expression is famed, is, after all, intellectually specious. Certain of his “Canterbury Tales,” extenuate them as we may because of the grosser standards of the fourteenth century, remain as blots upon a very great writer's name and fame, one who could command the beautiful tenderness of

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the Pyramus and Thisbe tale, the lovely pathos of that of the patient Griselda, or the clean, honest English fun of the story of Chanticleer. We forgive him his grossness in view of the way he could and did soar above the muck into the eternal blue. The idea that his transcripts of common life and coarse people could not have been done without smut is nonsense, and any literary theory that acts on such an assumption misconceives the mission of literature.

As Mr. Howells once declared,—and he never said a truer thing,—the beast in man is slowly dying in life and should be allowed to die in letters. To poke fun at expurgations and sneer at the process of Bowdlerization is shallow business and begs the question. An author's picture of humanity, while it should face facts, of course, should also face man upward, since that is his deepest significance; he is going that way, or is intended to. Biologically speaking, he once went on all fours; when he stood erect on his hind legs, not mechanically, like a trained dog or the ape who is man in the making, it was a physical symbol of a spiritual truth: man's starry aspiration, his quest for things that are above earth.

## Re-reading Books

"**A**H, the books that one will never read again," cries George Gissing, and the words will find a responsive echo in many a bookish heart. Life is indeed short, and literary art, in these days of the Jameses and the Bennetts, very long; so that the well-meaning reader is hard put to it to make the acquaintance even of a fraction of the contemporary literature supposed to be worth while, let alone re-reading what he has liked in the past, or knows to be of such fair fame as to call him to a closer friendship.

It is a temperate statement to say that, if we all read fifty fine books and then read them again, it would do more for us in the way of culture and character than to read one hundred books of like value. But the temptation is, under the modern obsession of haste, to cover more ground, although we remember little and absorb less. A first-class piece of literature twice read will be more than doubly appreciated; many a virtue, which was overlooked at the first contact, is realized to personal enrichment, and you begin to see why the book in hand is called a classic, a masterpiece. Great books, then, are preëminently for a re-reading. Their full greatness is only thus to be comprehended.



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Another reason for the re-reading is to be found in the undeniable fact that, coming to the experience perhaps five years or even ten later, the book seems to have changed, which means that you have. You know a lot about life, it may well be, that you did not know before. You have grown in mental stature, and so can evaluate excellencies which escaped you earlier; you have come to learn somewhat of literary art, and can judge a work of art from that vantage ground, whereas before you were estimating it rather as a piece of life, a human product. As you have matured, themes not before interesting now seem paramount, and you see that at first you did scant justice to the range, depth, and beauty of the creation. Strictly speaking, to find the whole significance of any book adjudged as of supreme importance by the world, one should read it at intervals of a few years from the school period to the time when the eye closes to all mortal activity,—which obviously is a counsel of perfection, but none the less true for that. I have seen folk look with a sort of tolerating condescension upon a fellow-mortal who quietly declares complete ignorance of some startling current phenomenon of letters; but often you will find that quiet, unpretentious person carrying on a steady commerce with the very best literature and too busy and happy in it to worry about the literary *nouveau riche*. Let us not be so sure that he has the worst of the bargain.

It is his kind, after all, which makes the true select

## Re-reading Books

audience for Letters; a plebiscite made up of folk who insist on a personal relation with a book and will not be bullyragged into commerce with it, let the majority say what it will. "Are we to be suspicious of a book's good character," is Lowell's whimsical protest, "in proportion as it appeals more vividly to our own private consciousness and experience?" These quiet appraisers know better.

Gissing, however, in the essay from which the sentence was quoted, might have had a different thought in mind. He might have referred to an experience which all true book lovers have sooner or later. I mean the late reading of some book treasured in childhood, loved through a fond mist of memory, and, alas, at the mature re-reading, proving a sad disappointment: the magic gone, the old glamour forever departed. This is at once the peril and delight of early, uncritical contact with books. One drains the glass to the dregs, and it is all sweet and palatable; in the years that bring discrimination, one sips, judges, and finds the vintage no longer rare. There are certain famous pieces of literature, known to every child whose opportunities have been genial, which those children, now grown-ups, hesitate ever to read again. There is a fear that the cake would turn dough, a pleasant ideal be lost.

The danger of disillusionment is so considerable, we are so anxious to preserve the affectionate remembrance, that, more likely than not, we refrain throughout our

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days from trying "The Arabian Nights," or "Gulliver's Travels," or "Grimm's Fairy Tales," or "Don Quixote." I had the good fortune, for example, to be brought up on Dickens, and, by the reverend age of fifteen, his characters, Micawber and Pecksniff, the Wellers and little Dombey, Barkis and the child dressmaker, Peggotty and Ham and little Em'ly, Joe Gargery and Smike and Sarah Gamp,—these and a multitude more,—had become dear and familiar companions. Then for many years the master of Gadshill was laid aside. And when, at last, "Bleak House" was settled on for a re-reading and new valuation, there was a cold fear at my heart that the Dickens of the unforgettable past, the Dickens whose folk for grave or gay were as real to my young imagination as those of my own household, and more real than almost all the workaday world, would be seen for the caricatures which some critics had been at pains to tell me they actually were.

It was, in sooth, a perilous moment, that first plunge into the beautiful dead experience. But behold, the master lived again, better than ever, I found, greater than the youngster had dreamed, fuller of meaning, doing noble deeds as well as writing noble words, commanding the fount of tears and smiles, leaving his England a finer place than he found it. I had taken the risk, and glorious had been the issue. The jaded taster of books, with his Dickens more precious than ever, knew now that the mighty Vic-

## Re-reading Books

torian story-teller was to be a friend and helper all the way along the life-road, and not merely the temporary friend of childhood.

On the whole, it is probable that a real classic, the kind of book that has successfully evaded the destructive attacks of time, will stand this test of re-reading. There are personal exceptions, no doubt, such changes of test and taste—not by any means always trustworthy—which result in dislike or indifference where of yore was vehement regard, even supine adoration. But as a generalization, you can trust the great book, and return to it with the confidence that it will reward the effort and perhaps give you a delightful surprise. “Little Women,” beloved as a boy by me,—with some shame when I heard that it was called “a girl’s book,”—was re-read late in life with the same result: tears came, joy reawakened wonder that the notion should have got abroad that such a thing was not for all ages and both sexes!

The moral of it all is: re-read the big, beautiful books, nor put it off on the plea of lack of time, or fear of disillusionment, or any other silly reason. Don’t allow yourself to make the mistake implied in Gissing’s final words: “Books gentle and quieting; books noble and inspiring; books that well merit to be pored over, not once but many a time. Yet never again shall I hold them in my hand; the years fly too quickly, and are too few. Perhaps when I lie waiting for the end, some of these lost books will come

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into my wandering thoughts, and I shall remember them as friends to whom I owed a kindness,— friends passed upon the way. What regret in that last farewell ! ”

## Shaw's Wisdom

MRS. SHAW has edited a pretty volume of the selected sayings of her husband, George Bernard Shaw, under the title, "The Wisdom of Bernard Shaw." The volume is made up of excerpts from his writings, ranging in length from a brief paragraph to essays of several pages. The book is prefaceless, perhaps because the author's own prefaces tend to be voluminous, and the aim is to present the dramatist thinker as a maker of *pensées*—the detached, scintillating nuggets of thought in which some theme is so touched and ornamented as to stimulate and charm the reader.

Such a collection of sayings in one respect does Shaw an injustice, representative though it is. It draws attention to his power of epigram and aphorism at the expense of his quality for sustained and cogent argumentation, an aspect of his genius the world as yet is rather loath to recognize, yet very necessary to a comprehension of this unique son of Ireland. In fact, Shaw's unity of teaching, the singleness of purpose and theory which runs through the twenty-odd plays he has written, as well as through the extra-dramatic critical work, has been largely lost sight of in

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the enjoyment of his gift as phrasemaker and purveyor of paradox.

With this understood, however, the present book is welcome, and those who read with the habit of rumination will not fail to see that there is more than the happy turn and the startling statement in these pages; that here, on the contrary, is a very earnest mind speaking with the force of conviction concerning matters of vital interest to him, and with the desire to persuade others. To go further, I incline to think that this little volume of close-packed thought will place the author with the writers of *pensées* who have permanent value among the literary masters: Pascal, Amiel, La Rochefoucauld,—one thinks of the Frenchmen first,—Heine, Turgenev, and others of the elect.

Here is that union of worthy thought with expression that is preservative which one has come to associate with this class of writers; above all, the concision and precision which add elegance to strength, and result in that effect of much in little which makes the sentence, the passage, the page memorable. Take this specimen, brief, pregnant, brilliant, chosen from "Man and Superman": "When a man wants to murder a tiger he calls it sport; when the tiger wants to murder him, he calls it ferocity. The distinction between Crime and Justice is no greater."

Or again, this from "The Doctor's Dilemma," an excellent example of suggestive thought so happily

## Shaw's Wisdom

couched in language as to make its meaning the more arresting: "What is called Science has always pursued the Elixir of Life and the Philosopher's Stone, and is just as busy after them to-day as ever it was in the days of Paracelsus. We call them by different names: Immunization or Radiology or what not; but the dreams which lure us into the adventures from which we learn are always at bottom the same."

One of the things a careful perusal of the little volume will bring out is that Shaw is not a writer who gets his hearing by a mere manipulation of words and the paradoxical reversion of the expected: what Oscar Wilde is often guilty of, and Chesterton, too. Shaw's impression is made by more than surface scintillations; there is solid stuff beneath the glitter of speech or pyrotechnics of method.

This comes back to my remark that the side of Shaw that needs attention and emphasis is not the side which exhibits him as phrasemaker and paradoxer, the side in full evidence in the selections making up the present volume. The Shaw still little known, or at least less known, is the thinker of a definite creed, the serious social student, the believer in life as a splendid, mystic undertaking which each is a part of and must assist by the fullest and freest expression of individuality. Here is Shaw the socialist, the crier-up of the life force, the man with faith in God's plan and man's destiny. Social passion, meaning the burning desire to do one's share for the betterment of society, especially in its



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impoverished and wretched members, irradiates all Shaw's work.

So far from having no consecutive purpose throughout his writings, no author has ever hammered with Thor strokes at one view for a quarter century more persistently. He put an antic disposition on wittingly because, as he told us, he wished to attract attention to his wares, and knew that the use of the cart and the trumpet was the way to do it. But it is a shallow and foolish deduction from this to suppose him a mountebank, because he chose the mountebank methods to bring, not to the specialist but to the general public, his advanced notions on society. Twenty or more years ago, these notions looked very much more alarming than they do now. Shaw was by so much ahead of his age, which has now caught up with him, and people are fast getting wonted to talk about eugenics and pensioning mothers and municipalizing doctors and many another Shaw vagary which turns out to be sound modern thinking.

Thus the unified and constructive philosophy which underlies this writer's dramatic works and his ample critical books, whether on nominal literary themes, like "The Quintessence of Ibsen," or purely scientific and sociological, as in the Fabian Essays, must be ascertained by that patient reading which comparatively few as yet find time or inclination to devote to Shaw. Meanwhile, the many can enjoy his "wisdom" as it is revealed in his wife's selections.



## Shaw's Wisdom

Shaw is not of the class of authors who say a thing in a striking way which you, poor wordless one, have long felt and wished to say, but being dumb, needed a spokesman to say it for you. We all know the pleasure in a writer based on the fact that he thinks as we do and can convey the agreement in felicitous terms. Shaw, quite otherwise, awakens, as likely as not, the most violent disagreement: you almost talk out loud in reply to him as his sentences come along and knock you down like a policeman's club. He arrests you, to carry out the figure, when you have not broken the peace (you believe), and hales you up to judgment on the charge of not being mentally alert.

He shocks, challenges, manhandles your mind, and this treatment, while it may be as unpleasant as massage to one suffering from rheumatism, is nevertheless a mighty wholesome thing in the way of a shake-up, resulting in a livelier circulation and a certain tonic effect on the sluggish intellect. In the end, you are grateful to one who has forced you to be alive, reconsider your position, look at the other side of the question and be sure that what you called your belief was not merely a state of mental inertia.

## Books and Men

**C**HAUCER, bookish though he was, loved Dame Nature and, when spring came, would cry: "Farewell, my books and my devotion!" Then would he go forth into the open, to breathe the delicious air and rejoice with all the dear growing things. This line of his is one of many similar references to the contrast between books and man, books and Nature, books and life, not only found in literature itself, but heard daily on the lips of mortals.

Strange it is, nevertheless, and no less unfortunate than strange, that there has arisen in men's minds this conception of literature as separate from life, even in a way antagonistic to it. Hence it comes that the way-faring man goes by on the other side when a book rather than a fellow-man is offered him; he forgets that, in Milton's fine saying, "a good book is the precious life blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up to a life beyond life." The trouble came in setting down literature upon the printed page. Gradually crept in a seeming distinction between human beings, whose talk made letters, and the talk thus stereotyped in books.

Yet all literature in its origins, study its rise and de-



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velopment in what nation you will, is simply eloquent and gifted folk talking of the world they live in. The talk was written down in manuscript before the age of printing, for the purpose of transmission; later, in the fifteenth century, printing was invented and a far wider circulation became possible. By its aid, literature could be sent broadly over the face of the earth and handed down to after time, thus perpetuating the inspired words of the writer long after he had passed away in the flesh. The incalculable benefits accruing from this preservation of literature are apparent; indeed, only thus could literature have become the inheritor of past renown and one of the chief glories of a civilized people, a thesaurus wherein could be found, like the massed jewels in a treasure chest, the stored-up wisdom, eloquence and beauty of which the race is capable.

But along with this advantage went an injury, a grave one: the artificial division we speak of, between life and literature. In primitive times, let it be said again, literature was life reflected in the tones, the gestures and the burning words of men of genius,—and of women as well, when a Sappho lived and sung. The epic poem, the ballad and the lyric were narratives short or long, told in verse, because the measured language of verse was more musical and better remembered than that of prose. Early man, in literature, uttered poetry before prose. The lyric was a song-poem where the minstrel, with instrument in hand,

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chanted to the literal accompaniment of the strings. Drama was spoken in some public place, so was oratory; the novel in the modern sense had not been born; recited narrative, whether in prose or verse, took its place; all was spoken or sung, the *viva voce* outpourings closely associated with the persons themselves, as they stood before their fellow-men, produced in this simple, forthright, democratic way, the literature of the world. "In the beginning was the word" is as true in literature as in religion; the word being that which comes hot from the heart and living to the lips of human beings who have somewhat to say which the world would willingly hear.

And yet, because all this became gradually forgotten, our age has set up a false and foolish distinction between the spoken and written word. Thousands read poetry, which is in reality song, without a thought of reading it aloud themselves; they even resent hearing another read it. Drama, for the reason that it can be spoken as well as read, lies under the sad imputation of being unliterary, or but half-literary, and purists go so far as to prefer plays in book form to plays enacted, as all plays should be, upon the very stage. Pale-faced, fiery-eyed enthusiasts gather in dim-lit drawing-rooms and indulge in secret rites which the unregenerate outside understand to be occult and mystic — the sacred word "literature" being a shibboleth which alone passes the devotee into the penitentialia of the mystery. And we behold the climactic

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absurdity of school children brought to make a sharp distinction between books and men, and pedagogues lamenting the wane of literary studies, with the increase of more practical aims and ambitions. As if books, properly used, were not the very tools of life, both for instruction and inspiration.

You regard it as practical to consult a lawyer or physician in respect of some matter within the domain of his special knowledge. Why is it less practical to consult those same men in the words they have written down in a book? Nor would it be deemed bookish to listen to the thrilling sermon of a vital preacher, yet were a book of his sermons in hand, the word of criticism might be heard.

The same argument is quite as cogent when it is applied to polite letters in such forms as essay, fiction, poetry and the drama. Such books give us the wisdom, the music and imagination, the tenderness and fun and noble indignation which are in men, without the waste time of their stupidity, the friction of their personalities, or the disillusion of their evil-doing. You become an Academe with Plato, stand upon some Pisgah Mount with Moses, walk with Dante and Virgil through the underworld and learn the fates of the Florentines; sail the broad seas with Homer, watch with Shakspeare the breaking of mighty Othello's heart, listen to Bacon's sententious melody, each sentence a clean-cut gem, and stretch out your hands to pluck the sun-kissed flowers in the summer mead whereof

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Keats sings. Do you think for a moment that literal converse with them all, these masters of words, makers of music, weavers of thought that has changed the world and made life richer and sweeter, would have been so well worth while as contact with them in this deeper way through the words which are their imperishable legacy to all the children of men? To state the question is to air its folly.

No, let us have done with this altogether unfruitful mistake. It is bad for education, in that it establishes an unwarrantable prejudice against so-called book culture on the part of the young, who really are ripe and ready for literature when it is sensibly offered. It curtails the potent influence of literature over the earth, by suggesting pseudo tests and erroneous standards for its recognition. And, saddest of all, it keeps many of mankind away from the splendid tonic of intercourse with these chosen blithe spirits who have made our great literature, as if they spoke to the few, instead of to all with ears to hear, and were cloistered away from the bosom interests of the race. Whereas, it is their distinction that they know life at large and speak for us all.

## The Bible in the Schools

**A**TENTION has been called of late to the matter of the Bible in the public schools. Interest has been aroused by the recent action of the Pennsylvania legislature, which passed a law making it obligatory for every teacher in the State to read daily to the pupils for a few minutes from the Scriptures.

In these days of appreciation of the cultural value of the Book it is not eccentric to make the point that this installation of the Bible in the schools is entirely advisable; and more, it is likely to be adopted all over the United States in course of time. The Bible, once read in the school as a matter of course, has been almost totally banished from our public school system because of old it has been used in a way to give color to criticism: that is, for sectarian purpose or with theological bias; or if it has not been so used — which may well be doubted — the fear that it would be has led to its discreet withdrawal from any part in the daily exercises.

Those of us, however, who are of middle age or more can well recall that a generation ago reading from the Scriptures was a regular part of the daily routine in the grammar and high school. The change



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all over the Union has been marked in this respect.

Of course, the best argument for the restoration of the Bible in the schools is based upon the undeniable fact that the reading of properly selected passages, passages chosen from the splendid wisdom and poetry of a collection that is confessedly the proudest ornament of our English literature, is in the deepest sense educational. It stimulates in the hearer the feeling for the beauty of upright conduct and breeds those ethical ideals which are the safeguard of a nation and the very foundation for that character building which should be education's highest aim.

It is terribly short-sighted to exclude or neglect a book that is capable of this influence, on the entirely erroneous supposition that it will be and must be used in the interests of propagandism of one sort or the other. A committee, representing the best thought of the community, and of varied attitude as to religious conviction, can be named to make the selections, if it be deemed dangerous to leave it to the option of the individual teacher; and modern men and women, of whatever faith, are fast becoming a unit in the acknowledgment of the broad spiritual inspiration to be found in the Book of Books. To avoid possible offense, the excerpts can be drawn exclusively from the Old Testament, if necessary. The finest portions of the Psalms, Proverbs, Prophets, and narrative books, drawn upon in this way, would have an effect simply

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incalculable, when listened to morning after morning through the school year. Especially is this true when both skill and reverence unite to make the reading what it should be, for perfunctory coldness can nullify the effect.

There is an additional argument for this use of the Bible in the schools of America at the present time. The tendency of our modern educational system has been markedly in the direction of specialization and of the multiplying of studies, and those studies, broadly speaking, of a more utilitarian nature, or at least applied to some practical, immediate result. Hence, it has become increasingly hard for the young student to keep his proper sense of proportion and to realize that, while all knowledge is good, there must be some unifying principle to bind together the many and seemingly unrelated subjects, in the aim to produce sound and useful citizenship. This means turning out from our educational institutions people of self-respect and capacity, with an all-round comprehension of life and solidly grounded in the laws of life.

Who that has watched with a thoughtful eye the educational trend of our particular generation can deny that, because of this danger of losing the whole in the parts, it is the more imperative not to eliminate from the regular school training an influence which is cultural as opposed to the utilitarian, and spiritual as opposed to the merely intellectual? To place the spiritual, the influence that makes for character, where

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it belongs, in the center of a rightly ordered scheme of study, is to establish the right orientation. Contact with the literature of the Scriptures furnishes just that discipline, and the land that ignores it is woefully wrong in its educational ideal and method.

As the Bible becomes more widely recognized as a book of power and beauty, and less and less as an autocratic repository of theology, it will be ever more apparent that we shut it out of our schools at the nation's peril. The Bible in education is needed as a unique presentation of the spiritual growth of a race, seen in its towering personalities, the story standing for the whole race of man in its evolution to its higher capacities. Nowhere else is there a clearer and more inspiring expression of the life which is of the heart and soul, the life that transcends the flesh and is as much above brain as brain is above brawn.

Think of the myriad young folk of the land harkening of a morning, before turning to their several tasks, to the tenderest of the Psalms, "The Lord is my Shepherd," or to the magnificent nature chant, "The Heavens declare the glory of God," or to the everlasting loveliness of Ruth's utterance, "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee," or to the solemn and splendid words of David's lament, "Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided!" Who can question the value and need of such an opening of the busy day, the activities of which to so great



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a degree draw the mind away from such thoughts and feelings?

No definition of the word "education" is broad and right which does not accept as central and of supreme importance therein the influence of such literature as this upon human beings, and most of all upon the young who are being trained in that formative period when their minds are most open to its reception. It is impossible for the well-wisher of his country not to feel some uneasiness at any sign that this matter of fundamental importance is ignored or minimized or, at any rate, its recognition not incorporated in action.

Mrs. Houghton, the principal of the Knox School for Girls at Tarrytown, New York, declares that the modern school must supply the greater part of the spiritual and ethical training which girls of another day got in the home and church. And Mr. Hartman, of the Franklin and Marshall Academy, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, pleads for the importance of the boy's early religious education at home, to help the school in its work. The wise coöperation of home and school is desirable. Let the people see to it that the school does its duty.

## The Difficulty of Translation

THE best piece of translation into English ever made is probably Edward Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyát" of Omar Khayyam, and that is not a translation at all. The "Rubaiyát," more accurately described, is a free handling of certain ideas found in the Persian poet by the eccentric Victorian recluse. The original was but the starting-point from which the Englishman set out to express his own strongly individual views about life and love, death, eternity, and the soul's destiny. The *carpe diem* sentiment of the "Rubaiyát" happened to strike a deeply responsive chord in the breast of the nineteenth century writer and thinker; the rest followed. Not only was Omar's philosophy of "eat, drink and to-morrow we die" sympathetic to "dear old Fitz," as Thackeray affectionately styled him, but the poem voiced the spiritual mood of the moment in England and in the Occident in general.

In the middle of the last century philosophic and spiritual ideals were fast changing under the impulse of the new scientific thought. Old beliefs were given up or else suffered extraordinary changes. Many a boat, torn from the traditional moorings, was adrift upon a

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wide sea of speculation, doubt, even despair. Tennyson's "In Memoriam" shows how a reverential mind, bred in the Christian faith, had to undergo this intellectual anguish before finding firm ground. Arnold's agnosticism, with its profoundly sad but beautiful minor note, was an expression of the same unrest. Readjustment was to come in time, as our own age testifies; but for a while all was welter, uncertainty and alarm.

And so, in Fitzgerald's case, the man and his time were ripe to seize upon an interpretation out of the Orient, and make it voice all this occidental agitation. The doctrine that flowers and fair faces alike end in death, that therefore one should snatch the fleeting pleasure since it alone is sure, was the intellectual pose or the soul-wrung conviction of the moment. It is summed up in those melodious and memorable lines:

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of spring  
Your winter-garment of Repentance fling:  
The Bird of time has but a little way  
To flutter, and the Bird is on the wing.

Using, therefore, an entirely different measure from the Persian, and choosing such parts of the poem (a mere fraction of it) as should best convey the teaching he wished to present, Fitzgerald, with his wonderful gift for the felicitous word, the music that lingers in the ear, wrought what was practically a great English poem with an Eastern motive.


All of this leads us to the thought that there is no

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such thing as a translation of a genuine piece of literature, particularly of a poem, so as to preserve it intact, because the form of the original is of its very essence, soul of its soul, and that form cannot be lifted over from one tongue to another. Either you must be literal, give the meaning, which is to dissect a rose; or, departing frankly, like Fitzgerald, from any slavish copy, you must make another true poem.

Sidney Lanier, who was eminently successful in his translations (to give them the usual name), spoke of the impossibility of doing anything else, and no one was more capable than he of transferring foreign material to the mother speech. Of the many English renderings of Heine's exquisite "Du bist wie eine Blume," none is happier than that by Emma Lazarus, the gifted Jewish poet; yet one who reads German cannot but feel that even she fails to get the inimitable simplicity and pathos of the original. But try to better it yourself, as I once did during a week of barren effort, and you will be likely to conclude that the task is beyond accomplishment, that Miss Lazarus has done as well as can be done. No, imitation and dissection are not creation, and never will be.

This explains why the best modern translating from the classics or the standard poetry of Europe inclines more and more nowadays to the substitution of good, honest prose, recognizing that the disparity between tongues and the inherent nature of form make a closer transference impractical. It was not so in former days,



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when doughty Chapman turned Homer into sweeping fourteen-syllable lines, or Pope made the Greek urban in the neat rhyming couplets of the eighteenth century. Now, however, most of us prefer the noble Butcher-Lang version, the rhythmic prose sentences of which better convey an idea of the ocean surge of the original epic. The splendid prose translation of Dante by Charles Eliot Norton is a further illustration of the same critical tendency. Better good prose, which avowedly abandons the unattainable, than any substitute in verse, which, however skilful and enjoyable, does not reproduce either for the ear or the taste the peculiar, home-bred charm of what is native and a matter of intuition to the creator of the masterpiece.

It must be understood that when the claim is made that form is part of the life-principle of a composition, the view is implicit that form is not a trick, a garment put on and taken off at will, something superimposed from without. On the contrary, form as thus conceived is an integral part of personality; a poem, for instance, springs into being, compact of music, metaphor and imagination, all so inextricably intertwined that they can no more be dissevered than can the human body and spirit without the perishing of the whole man. There is a movement, a melody, in the Divine Comedy of the mightiest poet of Italy which never has nor can be transposed to English, because our language from its structure does not admit of the effects secured by the



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continual soft, lingering loveliness of the feminine endings in which Italian is so rich.

In the same way, to turn the grand harmonies, the free, virile music of the biblical poetry into the more confined limits of form common to English verse is to cramp, weaken and make impotent one of the unique poetic contributions of the world. N. P. Willis's biblical paraphrases a generation or more ago are good, even admirable. But they are as water to the wine of the original. And so with innumerable rhymed renderings of the Psalms and other portions of the Scriptures; there is always a marked loss and, in most cases, the result is sad indeed.

It all comes back to a true appreciation of that wonderful thing, personality. The personality of a maker of literature finds voice in his chosen word, the music that is in him, the heat of his inspiration. It is the direct offspring of a creative mood, a thing of his blood and bone, distinctive, set apart. Try to reset it, and the jewel will not gleam forth the same. The Italian saying sums it all up in a brace of pregnant words: *traduttore, traditore*,—"translators are traitors."



## Book One Hundred One

**L**ET any one hand me a list of the hundred best books, and immediately and rebelliously I name number one-hundred-one as the particular bright jewel of my soul. I resent being confined to a century of titles and, still more, I resent it that anybody, even a college of experts, should dictate my reading in such a fashion. Here lies the fundamental objection to any and all attempts to choose a certain number of classic tomes out of the literature of the world, that we may read, mark, and inwardly digest, and then feel that we are truly "cultured." Not enough leeway is left to private taste and personal idiosyncrasy. We no more want our list predigested by other people than we wish to substitute a food pellet for an honest, masticated meal.

Not but what excellent lists have been furnished, early and late: that by Ruskin a generation ago, the one drawn up by Dr. Eliot (assisted by a formidable array of Harvard specialists) in our day. Far be it from me to deny the virtue of such aids to the (intellectually) injured. But I get a certain malicious joy out of the fact that, even in these formal and grave efforts at wisdom, the personal equation creeps

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in, to invalidate the cut-and-dried nature of the work. Ruskin, in making his list, struck out representative novelists like Dickens and Thackeray, but underscored Scott, of whom he was a worshiper; clearly a case of erratic judgment. And so some Latin scholar might give Lucretius place before Virgil, although the consensus of opinion would be the other way. The most violent contradictions rage between cultivated knowers of books as to their favorites and, if the whole truth could be brought forth, it is likely that the time-honored conventional statements would be so often disputed by private opinion, the *obiter dicta* wherein we tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, as to leave in a very confused state of mind a person who assumes that relative rank in literature is long since settled.

Of course, in a broad sense and general way, settled it is. Your notion or mine about William Shakspeare and Homer does not shake either author from the place awarded him by the trained criticism of centuries; that may be acknowledged without debate. Nevertheless, I have met college professors of literature who declared to me, under the rose, that they saw nothing at all in the dramas of the Man of Stratford. Did anybody, who did not have to, ever read Spenser's "Faërie Queene" straight through, and preserve a liking for it, I wonder?

Be all this as it may, I pity the man who does not treasure book one hundred and one; meaning the



## Book One Hundred One

volume which he has not been informed he must read, as a means to literary salvation, but which he discovers for himself and loves as his peculiar and private possession. Perhaps it is "The Story of My Heart," by Richard Jeffries, that unique revelation of a shy English soul; or Du Maurier's "Peter Ibbetson," the author's masterpiece, so much more delicate and ideal than the popular "Trilby"; or again, your love may cling to a short tale of Ouida's, about a dog, in the face of your being told from childhood that she is a thoroughly shoddy writer. Maybe, in the days when you could manage Greek (how long ago they seem!), you came across an idyl by Theocritus which you loved at once and have ever since; you committed it to memory, and made it your blood and bone by countless repetitions,—though no human being you have fallen in with since seemed to be aware of its existence. Or in your browsings in German, suddenly, years ago, a minstrel lay by Rudolph Baumbach was chanced on, and it appeared to be especially penned for you, so that you lonesomely cherish it and quote it only for your intimates.

These are the recondite pleasures of a reader who insists upon having his personal likings and has read widely and wisely enough to have the courage of his convictions. He cares not a button that these little pearls of thought and expression are not among the world's literary wonders, safely catalogued with the *Books You Must Read*; sufficient for him that they

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give him a lively and lasting joy, and have become veritable comrades of the mind. Indeed, he gets an added, secret satisfaction in the thought that he found them as likely as not in the byways and hedges of literature, instead of in the beaten highway where congregate the elect. Is not the edge of the pleasure blunted when one sits down to read "Faust" or "The Divine Comedy" with the consciousness that all the previous generations have been before you at the feast, that you are taking their leavings, as it were? This is not a democratic reflection, I dare say, but it is a natural feeling none the less. How delightful to have been the first person to read old Homer, and how sweetly the poet, whom seven cities quarreled for, must have sounded in ears that listened for the first time to the "surge and thunder" of the *Odyssey*! Verily, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, when it teaches you beforehand just what should be your estimate of an accredited masterpiece.

It would be an interesting experiment to turn a sensitive young reader loose in a library containing all the choice books of Time, quite uninstructed in relative values, and then watch the naïf, eager spirit taste, and essay and compare and make friends, with no guide save his honest leanings and unfeigned loves. The trouble is that, with no previous training, the choice would likely miss the mark; the books worth while might sue for a hearing in vain.

But I am inclined to insist on the retention of a

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corner at least where one's predilections are given free play. Pay your formal compliments, as needs must, to the chosen one hundred, acknowledge the wisdom of the world's decision, and then, on a holiday, or at the bed hour dedicated to pure bookish bliss before sleep, with the courage of your faith and in a mood reckless in its irresponsibility, take down your good book one hundred one from the shelf (where you keep it within easy reach) and revel in it, regardless of consequences. That odd, extra volume may do you more good than all the standard authors from Homer to O. Henry. For after all, honesty in the reading habit is quite as necessary as it is anywhere else. I confess to a distinct suspicion of one who has no humble companion among his book friends; if he reads only the aristocrats, I charge him with intellectual snobbery.

Yes, let us acquire as soon as possible our five-foot shelf of classics, but leave a margin of room for the unpretentious darlings of our hearts, and have frequent sessions with them in all tenderness and deep communion; since they have a special message for our souls and have become precious even as those things we have made our very own.

## Taste and Genius in Letters

**T**O have taste without genius implies talent in a writer and a likelihood of success. To have genius without taste means the big effects of literature,—and possible starvation. It certainly makes probable a slower recognition than is sure to come to the man of taste and talent. And while the possession of one does not of necessity insure the want of the other, they are not commonly found together.

One is tempted to go further and say that a lack of self-criticism which results in astonishing inequality of effect is a mark of greatness. Thus the greatest writer of the English race, Shakspeare, is one in whom we detect the most amazing mingling of good and bad. There are passages in his plays so undistinguished, so utterly lacking the hall-mark of genius, as to seem the work of another hand. Matthew Arnold long since pointed out examples of such inexplicable falling off, in sharp contrast with those passages wherein, as in this from "Hamlet," we have the Shakspeare all the world knows and loves:

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain  
To tell my story.

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It were to write one's self down as insensitive to what makes sound literature not to perceive that here we have the distinctive qualities of grace, clarity, and imaginative beauty; and as equally insensitive not to be aware of many quotations from the same poet which lack them.

It would be also an easy though ungracious task to adduce more than one selection from Milton where the great Puritan poet, the second greatest of the tongue, is uninspired in like manner. Nobody is heavier and duller than Milton at his worst, unless it be Wordsworth, and the latter is unquestionably the finest nature poet of modern England. The creator of the wonderful sonnets, of the lofty odes and of a score of exquisite lyrics, of which "The Highland Girl" is an example, did not know when he was nodding and napping. Two-thirds of Walt Whitman, hailed abroad as in some ways our most remarkable figure, is compounded of the baldest prose. And Mark Twain, standing beyond cavil with the half-dozen of America's most noteworthy writers, needed a constraining hand to save him from his own failure to recognize literary *convenances*. Shelley, unlike Keats, is at times hopelessly unlyrical, yet is often rated as the greater bard of the two. So with still others, luminaries of the larger light, fixed stars, rather than wandering, momentarily brilliant meteors.

On the other hand, the capable talents and neat technicians can be counted on not to do the wrong



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thing. They never offend, partly, it would seem, because they never thrill; they do not tumble to disaster, because they never get high enough to make the fall dangerous. The really creative souls, when once seized with the shaping rapture, are too full of pent-up fire to let it out *à la mode*, through a blowpipe of technic. Their mistakes are simply the penalty of their passion, the defect of their quality. Literary criticasters in earlier years were fond of pointing out the shortcomings of Charles Dickens, a creative genius in fiction, if ever there was one. They did not stop to see that Dickens was too splendidly engaged in giving life to some three thousand characters for the delectation of mankind, to cross every *t* and dot each *i*. Nor did they sufficiently reckon with the fact that both Dickens and Thackeray wrote under the severest journalistic pressure, that the printer's devil continually pushed them for "copy."

Thus, in estimating these men, and others of the greater gods, two things not necessarily connected at all are confused: taste and genius. The mistake is made of imagining that because a writer has the highest creative capacity he also possesses, as a matter of course, the critical faculty as well. The ideal would be, such powers in conjunction: creative fire and the forthright hand to control it to the finest purposes of art. But such a conjunction in the literary firmament is almost as rare as the conjunction of the earth with the sun. Now and then, however, in literary history such

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writers appear; ancients like Virgil and Sappho, moderns like Heine and Stevenson.

Fragmentary as are the remains of the Greek woman singer, her lyrics, by the consent of scholars, show a mastery of form commensurate with the passion of beauty which she poured into them; the plastic mold which received the primal fire of her word was apparent, like a preciously perfect casket to hold jewels above price. And so with Virgil, "wielder of the stateliest measure ever molded by the lips of man," as Tennyson hailed him; his epic theme did not lead him into carelessness, but noble thought was married to lovely expression to make him one of the permanent poets.

Nor can criticism deny to Heine, a secondary figure, perhaps, in the significance of his message, such a union of fiery feeling and faultless expression as to make him a good illustration of the blend of taste and genius which we have in mind. He was, among other things, a master of that anticlimax which is a danger to the literary artist; but in general handled it with a consummate skill which hid the peril. And for simple, sensuous, piercingly pathetic effects where is his superior?

As for Stevenson, his word to mankind was as vital as his art was flawless and forever alluring. One cannot side with those who think his art was more than his intellect. The doctrine of good cheer, courage, faith and kindness which he so valiantly preached through

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twenty volumes was a welcome one to a time suffering from spiritual megrim. The cake had turned to sour dough and the child had infantile pains. Stevenson was the kindly physician with a sure cure. But his pill was so deliciously sugar-coated that it was great fun to take his medicine, and some even thought they were sucking candy, instead of being treated for a definite complaint. There is but one such in a generation; a writer who unites creative genius with such a mastery of form as to make him at once a model for imitation and a source of inspiration. In such a writer the antagonism of taste and genius disappears in a sort of chemical union.

Nevertheless, the contrast is likely to be eternal. On one hand, Aristophanes, Rabelais, Richter, Carlyle, Whitman, and Twain, mighty men but unsure artists; on the other, Horace, Virgil, Tennyson, and Stevenson, whose beautiful artistry has not quenched the personal charm behind it. And half-way between the two classes come the talents, little and large, the welcome *minores* who suit our more mundane moods. To name them were less than kind; yet to know them is often pleasant. They have their place, albeit a modest one. Taste has its triumphs, as well as genius.

## The Poverty of Poets

THE poverty of poets is proverbial. Their lack of this world's goods, treated humorously, is one of the most reverend jokes known to man. And there is enough in literary history to keep it alive, although the facts are by no means all that way. But there is something romantic in the idea of a member of the singing craft going hungry, wanting mere necessary bread, while he bestows priceless riches upon a heedless world. And so the public all but resents a Browning who looks like a prosperous banker and has never been indigent, or a Tennyson whose emoluments place him with the financially successful. How much more appealing to behold a blind beggar called Homer, or a Poe hardly able to buy bread and forced to sit beside his dying wife and see her shiver because of the dearth of bedclothes!

Money-shortness has become a sort of stage property for the bard, along with unshorn hair, a Byronic collar. Any popular man of straw, imagined by the general, magnified and clung to, becomes dear; it is so inconvenient to have the truth come along and knock the theory into a cocked hat. One has to do some new thinking to change the caricature, to reconstruct the

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idol, which means extra work that is not pleasant. The noble genus known as Pinhead hates to deduce an idea from the facts by his own unaided exertions, instead of comfortably taking opinions second-hand from the community. Hence, long live the mendicant minstrel, and may his shadow never grow — not less, but more, nor his paunch be lined with good capon!

The grain of truth in the notion is to be discovered in the appearance of immediate inutility made by poetry. The poet produces beauty as a profession, as does every artist, and at first blush — a good figure, by the bye, to use of the poet — his wares have neither the look of utility nor commodity. They sell cheap, if they sell at all, in the open competitive market. And so Signor Singer goes but poorly clad, and mayhap worries extensively about the next meal.

Then an absurd thing happens to the artist, be he painter, poet, or what you will: the community grows rich, cultured, civilized; the reputation of the humble beauty-maker increases also, and lo, you see Signor Singer getting his thousands a night, a violinist coining gold out of a skilful bow, an "Angelus" selling for more than a hundred thousand dollars,—and so on with fairy tales that are real. Art becomes an Open Sesame to all the money-bags, and he that was poor waxeth proud.

In this triumphal progress of Art — the capital may now be respectfully adopted — the Poet — also capitalized — gets his share of fame and fortune, albeit never

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quite so plutocratic as his brothers of color and sound. But he gets good pay for his work; Tennyson, it is said, received five thousand dollars for a short poem from the *Youth's Companion*, which seems poetic compensation for Milton's twenty-five dollars for "Paradise Lost." The successful poet can certainly be comfortable, to put it mildly, if he drop the Bohemian habits so long attributed to him — another stage property — and save his dollars.

Just now we are being told that Alfred Noyes is a good business man, commanding and getting prices that enable him to live from his verse. And he is being pointed out as a sort of infant phenomenon, since he can afford to go from city to city by Pullman and not walk *à la* Homer and other songful indigents. To treat him as unique is, of course, all nonsense; but it is just as well that he be temporarily an object-lesson to illustrate what is true of many more of that genus. Respect for his ability may lead to a better opinion of the army of his fellow-poets.

Judging by the amount of printed space relatively filled by prose and verse, poetry is very well paid indeed. A person with a fair reputation often receives fifty dollars for a poem which occupies a single magazine page. Get out the tape measure and you will find that a prose writer who gets a like amount by the page is doing extremely well. Of course, this is misleading, for genuine poetry is not to be written so steadily as prose nor is the demand for it so great;

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still, the reward in the case of poetry is by no means contemptible. A high-class publication will give twenty to twenty-five dollars for a sonnet. The elect know that a sonnet is only fourteen lines in length, although to the uninitiated it looks like a mere pendant to a prose article; which again is not so bad as it might be. No, the facts of remuneration hardly square with the traditional pathetic picture of the bard out-at-elbows.

The homely truth is that, if a poet is a shabbily picturesque object, it is because he has a screw loose somewhere, not because he is a poet. It can be granted to the *advocatus diaboli* that the nature of his work lays him open to the temptations of the imagination and the emotions, not to say the passions. But to imply that the poet has to go wrong, as if it were his line of business, is ridiculous. Here we meet with the fallacy of generalizations, a tendency of the human mind that has slain its thousands, and, it may be subjoined, very often with the jawbone of an ass. Neither poets nor any other class of men are all of a piece. Both Coleridge and Wordsworth were great poets and friends and neighbors up in the Lake Country of England. But the one never paid his bills, ran away from his family and drank laudanum, while the other was of character so austere high that one is almost repelled from him and would fain hear that he turned Bohemian once in a blue moon, at least.

It is lazy thinking, again, which leads people to

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establish a category for all poets, with a few over-worked criteria, and then to judge the clan thereby. Take Horace's *genus irritabile vatum*, for one example. The idea is that the race of bards is thin-skinned, hypersensitive, quick to take offense. No doubt this is true of many a bard. But how about the actor and the singer; yes, and the plumber too, when you hint that his work is slack, or his charge excessive? Does not he get out of sorts also? The poet has to father an entirely natural failing of the human race, just because an amiable country gentleman and charming lyrist back in the Roman days, thinking of the class he knew well, made a harmless remark, as it seemed, which he did not himself take too seriously. Horace had a sense of humor, and here is where he plays a posthumous joke on the world. He did n't half mean it,—remember that.

Let us, then, allow the poets to be respectable, even if poor, and not even poor, if they can manage to make money. Poetic composition is not absolutely incompatible with cutting coupons, although the two acts are not likely to be found in conjunction. And there is no reason in the nature of things why genius should be disreputable, in spite of all the Nordaus.



## Matter-of-Fact Fiction

**E**VEN as the danger of the romantic in literature is that it shall not stand on mother earth, so that of the matter-of-fact treatment of things is that it shall deny the dream and forget the vision. Nor is the second danger less than the first.

This is the possible lack, one feels, in an acute observer of mankind like Arnold Bennett, whose new book giving his impressions of the United States is in the reader's hands and will be generally discussed, no doubt, this winter: a singularly frank and honest book, and most readable. Perhaps nobody in our time has probed with surer hand the secrets of the spirit, and more subtly revealed its arcana than this young British novelist. You realize in reading him that little of the hidden springs of conduct escapes his eye. Yet, if at times he seems slow and uninspiring, here is the reason: he appears all but obsessed with the commonplace and the routine of everyday existence.

Hilda Lessway's exceedingly humdrum thoughts and doings are interesting, in a way, because they stand for so many of us; then, too, we are sympathetically involved because they are so interesting to her. We see through her eyes. Nevertheless, there are moments



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when one waxes impatient of all such fiction, and would be with Alan in the round house in Stevenson's "Kidnapped," or with the robbers in the cave in Scott's "Guy Mannering," or close beside Beauty as he rides that wonderful winning race in the opening pages of Ouida's "Under Two Flags." Explain it as we will, excuse it if we must, there is something in humanity that, after a surfeit of matter-of-fact fiction, flares up in hot rebellion and demands a picture that is livelier and lovelier.

Not all excitement is vicious, either in life or letters, and the colors of the spectrum include red and violet and suchlike romantic effects. It may be the sad privilege of mature years to recognize a land of dead-level, but youth knows better, because youth is passing its days in a manner so different, and an attitude so profoundly other, as not only to be bored by the gray-toned realist, but flatly to deny the truth of his representation. Who among us of the male sex does not remember that thrilling moment of romance far back in the dewy past, when, at four a. m. (the hour may have its variations, but the mood is constant), we slipped out of a side door of the parental dwelling and, with pockets bursting with fire-crackers and other incendiary material, whistled up the street for the mates who, similarly equipped, were forgathering at the rendezvous? The street at that early hour looked gray enough to ordinary observation. But not so; it was to boyish vision one splendid, hectic red, because

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it held all the glorious possibilities of the Fourth of July, and several beautiful hours were between this and breakfast, that unromantic thing of sheer necessity. To deny romance to a world that contains one such experience (and of course there are a million of them) is too absurd to waste words on.

The maker of the matter-of-fact kind of thing, however, puts in a prompt protest: he declares that what to our uneducated eye appears so commonplace, to him is wildly exciting, even ultra-romantic. Henry James, in an able dissertation on the art of fiction, tells us that to him an ordinary conversation about trivial affairs, between two average humans, is so fraught with tremendous implication as to be a sort of spiritual adventure for the novelist. We cannot deny him his feeling. But we can reply that, in this, he is hardly typical of the human race. That same bit of dialogue does not enthrall others as it does him; and, after all, fiction is a communicative art or nothing.

It is not that mankind demands excitement that is purely objective and external. No, that were to overlook the fact, not to be disputed, that the modern interest is more and more psychologic. There may be far more of interest, in the true sense, in a scene where two persons sit quietly in chairs on opposite sides of a deal table and talk together in tones never above the conversational than there would be in the rescue, just in the nick of time, of a gentleman bound to a railroad track by human fiends, two seconds before the express

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swept by. The two at the table may be settling their fates for all eternity, and every word they utter may be pregnant with doom. Probably, this for the modern mind is as gripping as any scene that can be depicted. It is the way an Ibsen or a Shaw or a Galsworthy chooses to interpret life.

The excitement must be there, whatever its kind; and for the novelist to make a god of the dull and then expect us, the long-suffering public, to gasp with interest instead of gaping with ennui is to ask too much of human nature. I do not mean to imply that Bennett produces this effect commonly, but simply that his method suggests this train of reflection; also that, in poorer hands than his, the result is indeed lamentable.

Do not forget it as among your duties, O Master Novelist, to show us the unusual: the unusual in incident, scene and character, not lying about life, oh no, but merely recognizing that that which may occur — and once in a while does — has a fresher interest for us, naturally, than that which confronts us every morning of the week. Go to life for your material, and observe that she — we attribute femininity to her because she is so delightfully uncertain — very often has a card up her sleeve that makes the game tense. Get off your own street if you find that it does not furnish you with the exceptional; or, perhaps better, clear your eyes of mist and see that those desirably romantic things are occurring there too, right under your nose. If it has come to the pass where all is

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flat, stale and unprofitable, decide that you are out of health, or have missed your calling. It is likely that your business of novel-writing looks more monotonous to you than it should, and you are passing over that tired feeling to us. On the contrary, your occupation should seem as fair and fresh and exhilarating to you as a baseball game to a boy, or a moonlight meeting to a pair of lovers. Heavens, man, think what you have for a theme: Life, the exhaustless, the marvelous, the varied; Life, the homely yet divine, the near yet the starry-high,—the bitter-sweet, incalculable, mysterious gift of the Maker of all!

It is a sad sight to see a writer, who has attained to a consummate mastery of the technic of his art, soured on life, his doll stuffed with sawdust, and so offering us a shell instead of the substance and sustenance we need. We can agree with Howells that the commonplace is precious, and yet leave room for the uncommon. And we can nod assent to the thing we know, yet welcome the fascinating, hitherto unknown, for those larger experiences help us to grow.

## Stevenson's Prayer-Book

**I** DRAW from its handsome case of green crushed levant a little book, faded from its original proud purple to a nondescript brown, and entitled "Family Prayers," by the author of "The Faithful Promiser," "Morning and Night Watches," etc. The publisher's imprint is that of James Nesbit & Company, London, the year of publication 1853. A commonplace volume, surely, whether one looks to external garb or literary content. A prayer-book of over half a century ago, bound in sober cloth, undistinguished in paper, print or binding, is no such matter.

But stay, gentle reader. We are not come to the heart of this business yet. Human associations gather about this ordinary volume to give it spiritual significance. It is the most precious item in my library. For on a blank page is written, in a large flowing hand, the name of Thomas Stevenson; and turning to the fly-leaf (already with a quiver, mayhap, of expectation), one discovers a visiting-card affixed thereon which reads:

Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson,  
Athenæum Club,  
Skerryvore, London.  
Bournemouth.

By this time those who are sealed of the tribe of

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Tusitala know full well why this homely book is to its owner of inestimable worth; and, forsooth, an object of interest to all bibliophiles the world over. Stevenson's father, as the signature shows, acquired the volume presumptively when his famous son was a mere lad — for he was but three when it was published. And in the fullness of years, when Louis was a young man already beginning to drift from the orthodoxy embodied in the prayer-book, it came into his possession and was apparently used much and made his own, as the pages with their penciled marks in his own handwriting testify. Inserted between the leaves are sundry ferns, which upon expert botanical analysis reveal themselves as tropical beyond peradventure, and so point to the conclusion that Stevenson had the volume with him in the final years in Samoa; while the visiting-card suggests his possession of it in an earlier portion of his career. The volume also contains, to augment its interest and value, two sheets of mourning letter-paper, upon which are inscribed, in the elder Stevenson's large hand: "Passages of Scripture to be read in connection with each other"; the references which follow filling five pages, now yellowed by time. Furthermore, there is at least one insertion in the son's hand, while certain penciled additions in yet another hand suggest the novelist's mother,— that devoted mother who so valiantly followed him to the far-lying Southern islands which were to be his "long home."



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With this prayer-book before us, how easy to conjure up a picture of the family group in the Heriot Street house in the central part of gray old Edinburgh. That residence—"a substantial house of gray stone built with the solidity so customary in Scotland; looking across the Queen Street Gardens, where the lilacs bloomed in spring and the pipe of the blackbird might be heard, while from its back windows could be seen the hills of the Kingdom of Fife"—was the third occupied by the Stevensons during the life of Louis. Thither they removed when he was seven, and it is that mansion which, amply described by him and others, we associate with the writer, boy and man. In an upper story was his small suite of rooms, one of them originally his nursery; it was here he grew up, attended not only by his mother, but by Cummy, that wonder among nurses, whose memory is so fragrantly intertwined with those flowers of the imagination, "A Child's Garden of Verses." In this house, doubtless, God-fearing and regular as it was, the prayers in the little brown book must have been read aloud many a morning, delivered with all the picturesque unction we know Thomas Stevenson to have possessed, from more than one description left by the son. One longs to find in the mass of *memorabilia* which Robert Louis gave to the world some direct chronicle of this book, some hint of its use or token of its presence. But none such, I fear, can be found; at any rate, my search has been in vain. It must remain for the mind's eye



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to see the Heriot Street group listening from day to day to the words of worship drawn from the "Family Prayers."

The visiting-card, witnessing to the fact that in due time the little volume passed from father to son, is also an evocation; it recalls a three years' section of his life, momentous to himself and, in truth, to late nineteenth-century letters. It was the period of his mid-manhood, when, from thirty-four to thirty-seven years of age, he lived the life of an invalid at Bournemouth, in the house which his father, then fast aging towards death, had presented to Mrs. Stevenson, and upon which the name "Skerryvore," signifying the most beautiful of the lighthouses built of the family firm, had been appropriately bestowed. Stevenson, with that pathetic capacity of his for pleasure in the good things of fortune, had been vastly delighted over this gift and enjoyed to the utmost the family installation in their new demesne. It is described by Mr. Balfour as "a modern brick house, closely covered with ivy; from the top windows it was possible to catch a glimpse of the sea. There was one-half an acre of ground, very charmingly arranged, running down from the lawns at the back, past a bank of heather, into a chine or small ravine full of rhododendrons and at the bottom a tiny stream." As for the author's childlike delight in the house, take this very characteristic bit from the Letters: "Our drawing-room is now so beautiful that it's like eating to sit in it. No other room is so

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lovely in the world; there I sit like an old Irish beggarman's cast-off bauchle in a palace throne-room. Incongruity never went so far; I blush for the figure I cut in such a bower."

From the view-point of literary creation, this fragment of his life was one of the most brilliant — perhaps the most brilliant — of his whole career. It was during these three years at Skerryvore that he gave forth the "Child's Garden," "Prince Otto," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and "Kidnapped"—a quartette hardly to be matched by any other four books he produced. But, alas! his health steadily declined; seldom was he able to go up to London and make use of The Athenæum Club, of which, as his card indicates, he was a member, there to meet Colvin, perhaps, or Lang or Henley, friends and cronies all. For the most part, he could not pass the confines of his own grounds. Hemorrhages were frequent and violent; an enemy "who was exciting at first, but has now, by the iteration of his strokes, become merely annoying and inexpressibly irksome," is his own comment.

Then, too, his father, who came down with his wife to live at Bournemouth in the autumn of 1886, in order to be near the son for the ensuing winter, rapidly failed and died in the next spring, his condition, mental as well as physical, being sad indeed. So that Stevenson's day darkened at this time in more ways than one. So poorly was he that, when summoned to Edinburgh by his father's passing, he went

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there, but was unable to attend the funeral because of a severe cold he had contracted. Yet the impression one gets of this period from the Letters, and from various other biographical testimony, is by no means one of gloom or discouragement; the incorrigible zest of life was always there: the keen interests, the gaiety, the nobler interpretation of that "Sufficient-unto-the-day" creed which is so valuable for this workaday world. Dear friends of his—men like Henley and Fleeming Jenkins—were often at Skerryvore, and many were the revels and junketings of which it was the center, despite the frailty of the Master. And to end with the brighter side, it was the books begun or completed at Bournemouth upon which his reputation most securely rests. The imagination kindles at the thought that, could we have sat with Stevenson in his much-admired drawing-room, or still better, beside his bed upstairs during one of the enforced sojourns in "the land of counterpane," we might have picked up casually from the nearest table the little prayer-book now before us. Surely it had tales to tell of Skerryvore and its doings. Often it must have been in hand, one deems; as likely as not it was read from daily, in private devotion or family worship—we know such to have been the Samoan habit, and the proximity of the parents in that last Bournemouth winter makes it the more probable. But the brown book, however lovingly entreated, will not unlock its secrets. We must content us with inference and guess.

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In view of his own unique series of fourteen prayers written for household use at Vailima, valued alike by the lovers of literature and the devotees of religious aspiration, Stevenson's ownership and use of this paternal volume take on a special significance. One's curiosity is piqued by the question whether, in any traceable way, he was influenced by the family heirloom in the penning of his own petitions. Were there unconscious echoes of the cadences falling so early on his ear, in the more perfect prose rhythms of the prayers he wrote while he lived in the South Seas? It hardly seems whimsical to believe that there may be some connection between the two: for his cousin, Mrs. Napier, writes: "In the Vailima prayers I seem to hear again an old melody that I know well — the echo of his father's words and daily devotions." It would be going too far to assume that this refers only to the impromptu contributions to the home worship by Thomas Stevenson. It may well be that the prayers of this very volume were in mind. There are, at the end of the book of "Family Prayers," a dozen prayers for specific occasions, and it is but natural to read these side by side with Stevenson's own, in the hope that some parallel may be discovered suggesting direct influence. But no such result follows. Indeed, Stevenson's contribution to precatory literature is distinguished above all else by its unconventional handling, its complete dismissal of the orthodox terminology and mental attitude which characterize the "Family Pray-

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ers"; and also by its special adaptation to the setting of the habitat at Vailima — as illustrated, for example, by the two prayers entitled "In Time of Rain." No more striking illustration of the difference between the elder and younger generation in the matter of religious faith and religious consolation could be found than that afforded by these two sets of invocations. Reading those composed by Stevenson, one feels that for the man of our day there have come, verily, a new heaven and a new earth. And one also feels that in the spirit of worship, although the form be changed, the new is full as vital and deep as the old. It is the personal, the individualistic note you hear, as against the traditional and associate in the things of God.

But there are other features worth mentioning about the copy of "Family Prayers." Noticeable at a first reading is the excellence of its manner, the harmonious, even high beauty of the language in which it is couched. The prayers are independent in form of the unsurpassed English Book of Common Prayer; but for taste, fitness and literary felicity they are such as one would expect a household like the elder Stevenson's to accept with sympathy. One can easily believe that so fastidious an artist of word and phrase as the son would have been loath, even for purposes of religion and with whatever glamour of parental inheritance, to use a book, as he evidently used this one, which did not possess value of text as well as of tone. Albeit the orthodoxy of the volume is soundly old-fashioned, there

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is naught of the cheap and common to offend the taste.

One also notes the frequent work of the pencil, dividing off portions of a particular prayer as of special worth or application; and this expression of preference is interesting. A little examination shows that the impromptu editor, whether father or son, has invariably chosen what was most happy in manner or noblest in thought and feeling. Several times, for example, in an invocation for the welfare of the family, the allusion to the servants is stricken out. Thus: "Bless the members of this household. May they walk before Thee with a perfect heart. May the young be enabled to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. May the servants be enabled to live out and act the lofty motto, 'We serve the Lord Christ.'" The final sentence is erased. Again, in another prayer, the text reads: "Bless us who are now surrounding Thy foot-stool, whether as master or servants"; and, as before, the final clause is penciled through.

Does this mean that in the Edinburgh home the kitchen folk were not bidden into the fore-room worship; or that Stevenson down in the Samoan Islands, with his dusky servitors around him, did not wish to use the servile word? For it is not unlikely that this book was commonly read in the Vailima house before its master had indited his own prayers, or that they were merely supplementary to it. Whatever be the

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truth, there is a pleasant thought in the avoidance of the word suggestive of servitude.

Full of interest to the student of literature are the occasional comments and corrections that look to an improvement in the form of these printed prayers; just what we might have expected from Stevenson, whose ear was so sensitive to the subtleties of English speech. We should not wish the author of the "Christmas Sermon," "Prince Otto" and "Weir of Hermiston" to overlook, even in the mood of essential imploration, the distinction between "shall" and "will," "should" and "would"—a distinction, by the way, which the modern newspaper is rapidly obliterating from the public consciousness.

It has been said that the Scotch, as compared with the English, are insensitive to this difference in speech forms; an idea which the student of historical English can easily rebuke and which the habit of the finest Scotch writers—Scott, Burns, Carlyle, and Stevenson—shows to be unsound. Certainly Stevenson was as exquisitely responsive to such *nuances* of style as is the highly trained musician to close harmonies. In three places he has, plainly in his own hand, stricken out of the word "would" the initial letter and substituted the letters necessary to make it "should"; thereby changing a mood of volition to one of conditional futurity, where the latter was clearly the intention of the pious framer of the prayers. It is characteristic of Stevenson to take offense at this little jar, one of the

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imperfections of expression which, it may be feared, many to-day even of the writing craft could have let go by without a protest — and small wonder in view of the shoddy English dinned incessantly into our ears! It will do no harm to quote these passages that the illustrations in their altered form may be before the reader:

“Had it not been for this inconceivable stoop from the infinite, where *should* we have been this day?” A little reflection will show that conditional futurity, not modified willing, is what the prayer-book means to convey, and therefore “*should*” is alone correct. And again: “Were we to be judged by the duties and doings, the sins and shortcomings, of any one day of the passing year, we *should* be righteously condemned.” Here the intended expression of futurity is secured by the change. Once more in the sentence: “Where *should* we be at this hour, O *God*,” etc., the pious author wished merely to imply futurity, not desire, hence Stevenson’s substitution is perfectly sound. The interesting point in the three cases is, we may reiterate, the indication that even in what may be called the non-literary mood, the trained ear and the nice taste of the great essayist and story-maker could not abide false notes.

Several other changes or interpolations are likewise of interest. In one case the text reads: “We come anew on this the evening of Thy Holy Day,” and there is an insertion after “We come” to make it read:



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"We come before Thee," the gain in correctness being obvious; here the instinct of the stylist is again at work.

A grossly careless passage which is set right is the following: "Let each feel that we have some work to perform"; the amended reading, of course, being: "Let each feel that he has," etc. And in another place, where the original runs: "May they repose their bleeding bosoms on Him"—which smacks of the crude anthropomorphic imagery of the older theology—the objectionable words, "their bleeding bosoms," are erased.

These are the only emendations, and the small number testifies in itself to the generally admirable style of this manual for family worship which was so long in the Stevensons' possession. The book had to run a double gauntlet, for Thomas Stevenson, too, was a man of most fastidious literary taste.

How we would like to have revealed to us the complete history of the little brown book! What stories it might tell of father, son and mother, of gray Edinburgh, of the long wash of Pacific waves, of all the shine and color and alien charms of Vailima, if only its now yellow pages might murmur of the past. But it is something to possess it, to feel sure that it was handled, carried, often used by the man who has become to many of us something more than a distinguished writer, one of the chief ornaments of late Victorian literature; "that's the world's side." To the



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true-blue Stevenson he is a friend and brother, listening to whose vibrant voice we are moved to deep love, and braced by whose sane and winsome doctrine of life we can face the struggle unflinchingly, and with a high heart.

## Barrie and the Baronetcy

**B**ARRIE and a baronetcy! Somehow they don't seem to belong. The whimsical, dear, gifted fellow whose plays and stories have stirred the imagination, roused the wholesome laughter and moved the sympathies of countless English folk, can be thought of not so easily as Sir James. In truth, a man of genius — and the author of "Auld Licht Idyls," "The Little Minister" and "Peter Pan" is surely that — always looks a little odd and out of place when the world's conventional honors come his way.

A Scotch writer whom one thinks of along with Scott, Carlyle, Burns, and Stevenson, does not quite appear to sit in the same galley with the rich brewers and mayors of country towns who nowadays are so frequently knighted in England.

But softly! Barrie has been made a baronet, not a mere knight, which is a different matter. The title becomes hereditary and, like Tennyson, Barrie can hand on the handle to his name, if he have male issue.

Nor, in spite of the cheapening of honorary titles in England of late years, should it be forgotten that to designate an author in this way means a desire upon

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the part of his country to show appreciation of his service: it is, too, a recognition of the art of literature, for which he stands, and to refuse it might be churlish, for this reason. Those, therefore, who blame Barrie — if any such there be — for accepting the dignity should reflect that it does not mean a lack of democratic spirit in him. Writers before him have declined like honors, it is true. Carlyle, the peasant born, did so, as you may know by visiting his house in Chelsea, where are hung the letter of Beaconsfield tendering the bauble and the Scotchman's manly and modest refusal. Lord Tennyson who, when he accepted his elevation to the peerage, was bitterly assailed by some on the ground that he was far greater as plain Alfred Tennyson than as Lord Tennyson, First Baron of Aldworth-Farringford, twice declined the prime minister's tender of similar honors, and only yielded when he was made to believe that his action was a personal grief to his sovereign, Victoria, whom he admired and loved,— as the dedication of the "Idyls of the King" bears witness.

And yet, and yet, for the life of me I cannot glibly think "Sir James" when I think Barrie. Peculiarly is it so in this case. Glad as we may be that his country has recognized what we all knew before,— that he is one of the few authentic and beneficent forces in letters among living men,— there remains a feeling not so easy to define, but strong in its insistence, that a title to the name of the man who wrote "Margaret

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Ogilvie" is not fitting, or at least does not fit. And I seem to detect two traits in Barrie's work which engender this feeling.

One of them is the simple, unfeigned, beautiful sympathy for humble folk—the folk of his own early life—set forth in such works as "A Window in Thrums" and "Auld Licht Idyls." Just as George Eliot did her best work in "Adam Bede" and "The Mill on the Floss," when she went back to her childhood memories and described the country-folk of Warwickshire, her first home, so Barrie, recalling rural Scotland with its kale-yard setting and quaint, canny, enjoyable characters, gives us of his best and best loved. He is so sensitively human, so democratic, so of the people and with them, that titles, or whatever gewgaws of pride, seem rather absurd when associated with him.

Then, again, not only is there something simple and democratic in Barrie, but his genius—especially in its most mature manifestations—has in it a quality of the shy and aloof: it is whimsical, almost elfish at times, with a fairy touch and a delightful irresponsible, un-grown-up mood,—the child mood of "Peter Pan" and many another phantasy. Such a writer seems not of this world and its fashion but, rather, belongs in the Land of Heart's Desire and the distant country of our lost innocence. The folk of his imagination are the winsome creatures of romance, all the truer that they walk not in daylight streets under the garish sun but inhabit our minds for "a dream while or so," as

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dear Charles Lamb would say. It would be a shock to come back from Wentby to hear the butler in a Mayfair drawing-room announce: "Sir James Barrie!"

The same humor and delicate poetry get into the later plays that deal with more ordinary mortals than those of fairy lore. You feel it in "The Admirable Crichton," with its sly suggestion that a man's a man, though he be a butler,—if once you put him where he can exhibit his manhood. It crops out in the charming "What Every Woman Knows," where woman's immemorial power of divination is hinted and mere man in his solemn obsession with the practical is good-humoredly made fun of. You get it again in the portrait of the absent-minded scholar in "The Professor's Love Story," which so wholesomely reminds us of the loveliness of a type too often sneered at as ill adjusted to the demands of daily life. There is nothing in modern literature finer, purer and more salutary than the fun of this same Barrie, as keen of brain as it is warm and sweet of heart.

This expresses something of the impulse of objection that springs to mind as we read the news and know that, being dubbed baronet and as a loyal subject of the King, Barrie will hereafter take unto himself such honors and appellations as inhere in the position. It is safe to say that the title will not be appended to his name upon the title-page of his books: for he knows, no man better, that his literary fame

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is far more to the world, in these days of deeds, than any official naming he may receive. He knows his fellow-men will love and honor him for the gentle teaching, the wise thinking and the tender rending of human hearts which have come from his pen, not for any place or post the prime minister may bestow. He is also aware that neither Burns nor Carlyle nor Stevenson, his great fellow-Scots, received nor needed such-like compliments: that a peer of literature does full as much for the world as any peer of church or state. Indeed, the reflection may as likely as not have given him pause ere he signified his acceptance of the reward.

However, he took it, and must not be blamed, since, as I have said, he may have wished to encourage the recognition of letters in his person, a principle wise and worthy to establish. "They who have shall receive." Already he possessed all that a noble name for writings that charm, enliven and elevate can bring an author. Let him take the ribbon "to wear on his coat," if but to remind Philistines that literature counts in the eyes of the English government. And so, hail to Sir James, and may his days be many in the land he has blessed!

## The Brownings

**T**HE recent death of Barrett Browning, only child of Elizabeth and Robert of that ilk, sets me a-brooding upon the Browning house. The son did not live up to the hopes of his parents and almost inevitably suffered from the comparison with his gifted father and mother, two mighty poets of English race and speech. We can be gentle with his memory, for he left us an excellent portrait painting of Robert; moreover, he was placed all his life in the hard position natural to the offspring of a sire so distinguished. There is sadness in the thought that, physically at least, the family perishes with this son, Barrett. But a second thought chases it away: the family name is safely embalmed in the amber of pure poetry, and those twins of immortality, Robert and Elizabeth Browning, will give it a fragrant meaning among English-speaking people for many generations to come.

There can be little doubt that Robert Browning, who arrived late, is now generally regarded as a major English poet, disputing with Tennyson alone the title of leading singer of the second half of the nineteenth century. Landor's words might be applied to him: "I shall dine late, but the room will be well lighted



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and the guests, though few, select." Long laughed at and neglected, Browning lived to see himself a fashion, almost a fad. He will never be a popular poet, it may be confessed; but the days of slighting are no longer possible. We now see clearly that he was a poet of creative genius and the first important English bard to incorporate into his work the modern realistic method and view-point, freely introducing the grotesque, homely, terrible and absurd elements of human life and, moreover, suiting his style to this purpose, and hence shocking criticism at first and holding back the general appreciation of his power and significance. That he won at last is due to more than the fact that he was strong enough to impose his view upon the world; he conquered also because his view was that sure to come with the modern interpretation of the relation of art to life. He expressed the *zeitgeist*, in other words. Any man who sums up the spirit of the time in this way possesses a power that is more than personal.

That Browning was not always a poet in his work, but rather a heady metaphysician, must be conceded, unless we wish to rank ourselves with those mistaken enthusiasts who have given the phrase, "Browning Society," humorous connotation. "Sordello" is not a great nor a successful poem, let the moon-eyed specialist cosset it in a corner as he will. Nor is the poet's alleged obscurity the mere imagining of the Philistine; muddy he is at times, both as to manner

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and matter; it is foolish to deny it, and only hurts the true appreciation of the man who wrote "Evelyn Hope" and "Andrea del Sarto" and "Love Among the Ruins" and "Saul" and many a masterpiece more. Browning might well have breathed the prayer: "God save me from my friends," since it is they who are likely to do him most harm.

The world at large has decided to overlook the eccentricities and forgive the faults, because of the fine, stirring message of the man, and the splendid singing moods that came to him; moods that sang him to the very top of his time. The worth-whileness of life, the fact that it is a spiritual battle-ground and the development of soul its one success,—Browning never tired of telling this to his fellow-men, and in doing so he handled human material dramatically, that is, in terms of the struggle necessary when characters clash and crises come. To read him understandingly is to drink a rich cordial that warms the heart and braces the muscles for noble action. He is one of the English poets who had message as well as music, and who loved life even more than literature.

What of his wife, the shy, elusive, delicate figure at his side, the two together offering us the most ideal union in the whole range of native letters? Where shall we place her, forgetting for the moment that she was the woman beloved by Robert, snatched from an invalid's couch to fly to Italy with him, there to have those fifteen wonderful years of heavenly comradeship

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with each other and with the Muse? That she helped him beyond computation, we know from "One Word More," "By the Fireside," the superb invocation in "The Ring and the Book," to name no more.

Often, in criticism, she is patronized; called, for example, "the best of English poetesses," an offensive word and an offensive attitude of mind; for Mrs. Browning is either a great English poet or she is not, and it is altogether unnecessary to introduce sex into the discussion. One critic had no doubt as to her quality,—her husband. "I am only a painstaking fellow," he said, "but she has genius." Too modest, this, with respect to himself, beyond question, and charmingly chivalrous; but as a judgment upon Elizabeth Barrett, poet, it is sound and sane. Genius she surely had, and whatever her technical faults—technically she is as open to criticism as is her husband—this tiny, frail woman had in her the divine fire and will, I believe, in the end be awarded a very high place in the English anthology. It is significant that when, in the middle nineteenth century, the post of poet-laureate fell vacant, and the succession was being discussed, Mrs. Browning was mentioned as a natural candidate, Robert Browning not at all. It was after he had injured his reputation by "Sordello" and other injudicious pieces; but the opinion in which Mrs. Browning was held is plain.

That opinion was justified, and is. If the man wrote great love poetry inspired by the woman, so did

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she to express her exaltation of happiness when she found that he was hers. For the voicing of pure yet passionate feeling between the sexes, the "Sonnets from the Portuguese" have never been surpassed in English song. Shakspeare, Rossetti, Meredith,—name the great sonnet sequences as you may, you can find nothing to place before the Portuguese series for white-hot spiritual power. They constitute the final and supreme word in the lovers' lexicon. After all, had Mrs. Browning done naught else, she would be among the few lyric singers of England.

Her other work is notable. The noble patriotism of "Casa Guidi Windows," the piercing social note of "The Cry of the Children," the wealth of intellect and feeling in "Aurora Leigh," and the rapturous lyric movement of a dozen poems, of which "The Great God Pan" and "The Nightingales" are familiar examples,—all stamp this woman bard as one divinely called to song, one who possessed depth and breadth and height along with sweetness. Fit mate she was for the other, in song as in life, and together they must go down in the annals of English poetry.

## Reputation and Reward in Letters

**G**ENERALLY speaking, reputation and reward go hand in hand, and one likes to feel that in the best of all possible worlds it is ever so. In the history of literature, however, there is much to contradict this amiable belief. Genius goes unappreciated till long after it is departed; a pittance is paid for a creation eventually of wide fame; and Grub Street is the habitation of those who ply the pen. Milton sells "Paradise Lost" for five pounds, Otway starves to death, Chatterton dies in a garret, and Goldsmith lies abed because he cannot pay for his laundry. The literary biography of the race, and of all races, is full of such pictures.

Doubtless the reason that the practical person — Arnold's Philistine — has been in the habit of looking askance at artists and *littérateurs* lies just here: they have not been, speaking by and large, well paid, at least promptly, in their lifetime. Now the world in general, regarding art and literature, judges it by its pay, as it judges every man. Nor can this view be brushed aside with a sneer. Truth to tell, it is the instinct of common-sense as well as of convenience to estimate a contribution by the money it fetches. It is, for one thing,

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a simple, tangible and quick way to ascertain worth. And, moreover, behind the test is the sensible assumption that if a man's work is of use to society it will be paid for in proportion. Even in art, says the Philistine (mark his "even"), if a poem goes a-begging or a picture hangs neglected in the studio, it means that it lacks utility for mankind and so has no *raison d'être*.

There is argument in this and it establishes an excuse for the maker of beauty in any art to hold his work and himself dear and not to cheapen himself and it by giving it away or selling it for a song. Let him remember that while the connoisseur may appreciate his output, whatever the world's immediate reception of it, the generality, whom he must depend upon for his living, will judge by his sales and his prices.

If the poet forms the habit, with Silas Wegg, of dropping into poetry, coyly refers to his work as "a poor thing, but mine own," and always acts as if, surprised with a piece of verse upon his person, he were caught with stolen goods, it is highly probable that the world will hold his service light, taking him at his own valuation.

But whatever be the attitude of the maker of literature, pseudo-modest or egoistically eulogistic, it is still true that masterpieces win their way slowly, so far as general appreciation goes, and often do not get a fair hearing in their own day. Posthumous fame is the award of some of the world's greatest. It is the exception when a Kipling at twenty-five finds himself of

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international fame; few mortals can have the pleasurable sensation of a Byron on waking up on a certain morning, while he was still under thirty, to find himself famous, and can echo his own words, "O the days of our youth are the days of our glory."

Nor when the recognition comes, early or late, does it as a rule bring with it anything in a financial way commensurate either with similar success in other fields, or with the time and energy devoted to the fulfilment of the task. One naturally thinks of poetry in illustrating, since it is, by confession, the highest form of literary utterance. How many poets have made themselves rich or even gathered together a modest sufficiency? Few, indeed. The legend that makes Homer a poor minstrel is the allegory for all his kind. Tennyson, to be sure, had a large income for many years and the prices paid him late in his life were so generous that to study his case alone would be most misleading. But, more often, decent poverty or out-and-out indigence has been the singer's lot. Of course, Bohemian habits and personal faults of character, as with a Villon or a Poe, have been factors in the result; but quite as often the cause has been the slow spreading of the news that here was that elusive thing called genius.

Whittier surely was a poet, one of the major American bards by critical consent to-day, nor could he be called a man unsuccessful in the pursuit of the muse; on the contrary, he was a people's poet, with all that

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implies of popular applause and pelf. Yet on his death, when Amesbury discovered he had left a moderate fortune of something over one hundred thousand dollars, the town was rather taken aback; it had supposed he had accumulated much less, and felt personally aggrieved that the poet had not been more frequently solicited for civic contributions. Whittier escaped, because he belonged to the clan which was rated as honorably poor. The prizes of prose are better, it may be granted; but even in the case of accredited writers of fiction and drama, the rewards are in most cases exaggerated, and the shining returns only sporadic. Bernard Shaw, frankest of men when he so chooses, tells us that during his first nine years in London, after he went there as a young fellow of twenty to win fame and fortune, he made just six pounds, a trifle more than three dollars a year!

In the light of these reflections, the question naturally arises: what is the incentive to induce genius to enter the field of imaginative creation, when the return is so slow and uncertain and small? And the reply is ready: the joy of doing it, and the inward sense of contributing that which in the end is universally acknowledged as of highest worth to the cause of civilization. From time out of mind, men have been willing to forego comfort and luxury, to endure neglect and even abuse, and to bide their time until belated recognition come, in order to express their dreams and rejoice in the creative fervor of making



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beauty. And in the quest they are sustained by the indisputable fact that just in proportion as a nation becomes enlightened, do their efforts get their due meed.

Although money is the most commonly accepted standard whereby to measure worth, part of the reward in the case of the maker of art, and a very appreciable and important part, is derived from his standing in society whenever and wherever that society is sufficiently evolved to know the higher values. He commands a consideration, a respect and often a social precedence which money cannot buy. He becomes aware that in the strict economic sense he is a citizen whose service to the community is of value, and is so estimated by his fellow-citizens. And he gets his pay, in large measure, in this way rather than in a cash consideration.

In spite of an apparent anomaly, the reward follows the service here as elsewhere, and a causal connection may be seen between the two. The hardship of waiting so long for appreciation is compensated for by the quality and permanence of the reward when it arrives.

## The Old-Fashioned View of Art

WHEN I asked Andrew Lang, in London, what he thought of Arnold Bennett, he replied in apparent seriousness, looking the while, after his wont, obliquely down on the floor, "I never heard of him."

The answer was, whimsical, a sort of protest against the intricate matter-of-factness of Bennett's method. It was also the speaker's way of donning a protective armor against an undesirable subject. Alas, I may never know, since the lips of the man who spoke the words are stopped with dust and silent forever. But in any case, the repudiation of realists and all their works by a writer who believed in and throughout his days stood for romance, points a moral. Lang was completely out of sympathy with the current school of "average life" painters; from his admirable arsenal of wit, wisdom and eloquence he was continually drawing weapons of warfare against them. Like his dear friend and fellow-Scot, Stevenson, he thought it the business of letters to present a world somewhat brisker and brighter than one finds it in the dead-and-alive succession of ordinary days.

He reveled in the past because it afforded a generous opportunity for the display of the more picturesque aspect of human life; in melodrama, because it

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contains the poetry of action; in historic characters like the Scotch Mary, for the reason that whatever may have been her faults, she was never dull and drab and commonplace. And so when he confided to me his ignorance of the very existence of the author of "The Old Wives' Tale," and later added that he thought John Galsworthy's name should have been "Glumsworthy," I smiled and understood.

The old order passeth, and the men who felt as did Lang, and James Payn and Walter Besant and Stevenson,—to mention no more of the elders,—are fast leaving the stage, or have already made their final exit. Even as Villon, in his immortal *ballade*, asks, "Where are the snows of yester year?" so we may soon be asking, Where are the romantics of yesterday? Lang himself was too vital and versatile, altogether too resourceful and amusing, to seem to lag superfluous on the literary board, but there can be no doubt that his position toward his art and toward life as well has an effect of dating from an earlier period.

The question is, Which is right? Shall we defend Bennett when he analyzes the mental state of Hilda Lessways, or Rider Haggard as he writes of "She"? Shall we prefer the James metaphysics to the Conan Doyle plot-tangle? Shall we let an author lie to us about life, if only he amuse us in the meantime? These be very pertinent queries, in view of the modern drift of literature, the rival claimants and the resounding clash of opposing creeds.

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It will be wholesome at the outset to acknowledge that in most cases the personal equation will settle the matter. Those who like the "penny dreadful" in the astute hands of a Stevenson will read it, let the critics cry as they will. And, on the other hand, the devotee of James will continue, despite all ridicule, to find satisfaction in the subtlest probings of the most gentlemanly of modern minds. People simply will not be reasoned into an opinion. And it is perhaps quite as well that this personal latitude exists; it makes for variety, which is the spice for criticism. But granting this, there is no harm in pointing out that both sides, the Langites and anti-Langites, have something of right on their side.

Literature is both for profit and pleasure and it is its business to show us grim facts as well as gracious alleviation. It is neither true to depict it as all gray nor as all purple, to represent human lives as one long torture or as a sort of perpetual high jinks. Some writers become especially interested in showing the heat and burden of the day; that is the modern tendency, on the whole. Others like to remind us of the nights when the moon makes magic of daytime humdrum and when music fills the air and love talks her own dear language. And these can never become antiquated, because they not only are dealing with certain facts of life, but facts that are extremely agreeable, since most folk prefer that moonlit hour to the hour on the stock exchange, in the department store or on

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the trolley car. The trouble really begins when one or the other view becomes arrogant and exclusive: the portrayer of the lyric moon asserting that there is no garish light of day, or the defender of workaday things scoffing at the mood of night skies and the soft witcheries of the demi-dark. In an ideal state these two phases of life should blend and justice be done to both; practically and as a rule, one or the other is emphasized far out of proportion to its importance.

It has been at once the failing and the virtue of this generation, in literature, that it has developed such a passionate zest in representing the common and unclean as to slight (for a season at least) the high and the holy. The original instinct to do this was democratic, altruistic, noble, but in its cultivation came abuse, and a habit was formed which in extreme cases makes the avoidance of beauty almost a cult. The difference between the merely pretty and the nobly beautiful is lost sight of, and much space given the spectacle of innumerable clever young persons trying their best to be mournful and ugly and tedious for the alleged edification of the world of readers, who really, at this juncture, do not read.

Therefore, to assume a patronizing, half-contemptuous attitude toward the Lang view is silly and shallow in the extreme. The counterview, the view so prevalent in letters any time during the last thirty years, is capable of monstrous exaggerations and has led to some of the most pernicious literature that has ever

## The Old-fashioned View of Art

bamboozled man. If one has to choose between the two, on the assumption that literature must be either instructive and unpleasant or delightful and naughty, one would very sensibly, it is to be hoped, select the latter. For the art of letters, like all other arts, is primarily for the pleasure of the world, and joy is its own excuse for being.

As a matter of fact, no such dilemma exists. A sound piece of literature may, and often does, afford the gratification proper to a work of art, while at the same time it teaches us about life, enlarges us mentally, and spiritually uplifts us. Indeed, it is a test of real literature — in contrast with the spurious and second-class kind — that it performs this double service, doing us good, even as it makes us happy. The greatest novelist who has ever lived, Balzac, remarks in the preface to one of his most wonderful books, "*Le Père Goriot*," that the writer of fiction should depict the world not only as it is but "a possibly better world." That is the proper ideal for all artists and it is the younger school's failure to realize and recognize the truth of it which irked Andrew Lang. All honor to his memory.

## St. Augustine and Bernard Shaw

**T**HERE is irony, it would seem, in bracketing the two names: the great scholar-saint of the past and the arch iconoclast and satirist of the present. Certainly, their views, even as their times, seem as far apart as the Arctic and Antarctic Circles.

St. Augustine, among other convictions, believed in a personal devil and made an excellent argument for his faith. Shaw believes in the life force and the eventual Superman: for him, deity and devil alike are depersonalized, existent but in the mind of man. Here indeed are thinkers at the antipodes of thought.

Yet are they curiously in agreement on certain essentials of conduct and conviction. In his recent noble play, "The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnett," in which we may forgive the inaccuracy of the American setting for the sake of the clear spiritual meaning of the drama, Shaw lets his horse thief and would-be black-guard, Posnett, make a remarkable discovery. He has tried hard to be a "bad man," after the approved Bret Harte formula; and he deemed he would succeed. He has stolen a horse—crime of crimes on the plains in the old days—and is making his "get-away." And lo! just because a woman with a sick

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child, whom he encounters in his flight, needs his horse that she may ride post-haste for a doctor and so save her girl, he dismounts, gives up the beast, and so is caught and haled back for a Judge Lynch trial. His neck is in the noose when we see him in the climax. But he offers the assembled court a piece of his mind, hanging or no hanging, for he has made a very remarkable discovery, he opines. He finds—in his own language—that there are two games being played in this world: a rotten game and a Great Game. He started out to play the former, but along came the woman in her plight and somehow, he hardly knows how or why, he could not play the game that is “rotten”; he had to play the Game that is “Great.” And he declares, in the pungent idiom of his type, that it “felt bully, just bully.” “And so, gents,” he decides, “I’m for the Great Game, every time.” He has got the “rotten feel” off him for once, and he never wants it on him again. As Stevenson would put it, he is doomed to nobility.

The complete change of terminology must not blind us to the unchanging recognition here of the “not ourselves that makes for righteousness,” as Arnold phrases it. Poor Blanco seems a far cry from medieval theology, but both Shaw and St. Augustine acknowledge, after all, the two opposing principles that are in life: the powers we personify under the names God and the Devil. And this western rough testifies in his fashion to the something in man which cleaves unto



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the one and abhors the other. Behind whatever nomenclature and above all creeds is the basic fact. Theologies are fluctuant, but they all strive to express the same thing. Deity, say some, First Cause, say the scientists; they but seek to describe the one mystery.

Some call it evolution,  
And others call it God,

sings a modern poet in a poem that is often quoted because it voices a widespread interest and attitude to-day. A modern like Shaw refuses to give a name to that inside him which fills him with a peace that still passeth understanding when he is true to his highest instincts. And the important thing is that the feeling is there and the man able to respond to it; and hence still a living spirit.

The Great Game cannot be denied by any sane creature: man is so made that he can never quite forget it. He may play the other game for a lifetime and even at times think it is the only one. But sooner or later, in a flash, under pressure, in sorrow, or perhaps when he is most at ease, comes the call, and he becomes suddenly aware that it is his particular business to play the Great Game, and nothing else.

Men do not disagree fundamentally on these matters; they dispute over terms rather than spiritual realities. In the matter of definitions, no two mortals could offer a more striking contrast than Shaw and St.

## **St. Augustine and Bernard Shaw**

Augustine. But in their belief in the Great Game, they "are brothers under the skin."

It is this sense of underlying unity which is drawing human beings together in these days, irrespective of all intellectual differences. Augustine considered it the primary business of a man to save his soul: Bernard Shaw would carefully avoid the theologic word "soul," and would declare it to be man's main affair to assist society — that is, his brother man — in a development which shall flower forth in the Superman — a step toward the saint of the religionist. And they are only engaged with two sides of the same desire, conception, ideal: growth toward the highest, which is God.

In spite of the fact that the Irish socialist-wit would dodge compromising words like "soul," "conscience" and "duty," he acknowledges them practically all the same,— indeed, is a very slave to their implications, being in his fundamental attitude toward life a Puritan of the Puritans, a preacher of the truth as he sees it, who cannot be comfortable while he perceives his fellow-beings complacently going wrong.

It is a solemn thought to consider how much of the terrible warfare induced by the intellectual quibblings of theologians and philosophers might have been avoided if only men had got together on the essentials and realized that they differed in the main on terms and the definitions thereof. Many deaths have come of definitions: the torture rack and the fagot flame are its children.

## **Little Essays in Literature and Life**

"What is your religion, Dr. Johnson?" asked an inquisitive lady of the mighty lexicographer, god of the eighteenth century coffee-house.

"The religion of all sensible men, madam," was the ambiguous reply.

"But what religion is that?" persisted the lady.

"That, madam, is what all sensible men keep to themselves," said the doctor, which was his way of suggesting that she mind her own business. If we had all minded our business, historically, in this great matter, what a deal of misery had been spared the children of men! And incidentally, how much nearer the Millennium should we be! "One person I have to make better, myself," quoth Stevenson. "My duty to others may be described by saying that I must try to make my neighbor happy."

When all is said and done, man has an odd way of appearing equal to himself down through the ages. He has grown, expanded, improved with the centuries, granted. But in his deepest emotions and instincts there is a family resemblance between the cave man and Meredith's Sir Willoughby, the egoist. He needs something to worship still, as he needed it then — and he finds it in Nature without or within himself, at his best.



## **Education**



## The "Feminization" of Culture

SOME time ago the writer attended a class in English literature at the University of California, conducted by one of the ablest and most brilliant of the younger professors of that institution. There were fifty persons in the room, of whom just six were men. If an investigator were to take the trouble to go up and down the land, gathering statistics in our colleges and universities where co-education is the system, he would find this proportion constant, the local variations not being sufficient to modify the rule. The literary courses everywhere are followed by so large a percentage of women as to justify the remark of a University of Chicago professor of English, that he might as well be teaching in a woman's college. Frequently, in periodicals nowadays, complaint is heard of the "feminization" of education and of culture. A recent essay by a well-known specialist, published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, will serve to illustrate a common attitude. The fine arts are feminine, the sciences masculine, it was argued by this evidently disturbed mind; the men are taking the concrete subjects and the practical courses, whereas the women elect and prefer those that are esthetic, cultural, gentle and inspirational

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rather than hardheaded and utilitarian. So, too, some critics become alarmed at the predominance of women teachers in the public schools; and are equally aroused over the fact that here and there a woman even occupies a college chair. It is a dubious compliment, surely, to the sex to imply that the educational influence it brings to bear upon boys is in some mysterious way such as to be deleterious and namby-pamby.

Is it a sound valuation of literature and its pursuit which regards it as a kind of educative frill or indulgence, well enough after the really important branches have been acquired; and especially fitted for women because traditionally they have had more time to pursue them? Is Sarah Battle's attitude the right one, when that estimable lady declared that a book was for relaxation after the main business of the day, her game of whist, was despatched? Or is it, contrariwise, a sign of that topsy-turvy conception of education in its proper gradations which places as of first importance those divisions of learning less vital in the all-round development of a human being into his highest powers? If culture be a mere frill and lady-like accomplishment, like dancing, embroidery, and languages in the eighteenth century ideal, then must we reconstruct the history of thought and reverse the opinion of thinkers from Aristotle to Arnold and Emerson.

It may at least be suggested that the cry of "feminization" over the terrible sight of ninety per cent. of women in all the literary classes of the country where

## The "Feminization" of Culture

both sexes gather, could be interpreted to mean that the men, misled by false ideals of education, are staying away from an influence which they particularly need, as a corrective of so much that is useful in the practical sense but not educative at all in the higher meaning of the word. And also, it may be added, is it an influence which they value at its true worth and significance whenever and wherever right ideals of life, education, and human nature obtain.

The cheap and insulting talk about "feminization" is a quite unnecessary slap in the face and, moreover obscures the whole vastly vital question. It directs attention to the wrong end of the problem, and darkens counsel generally. The final status of any nation will be won in exact proportion as it trains its citizens in that higher activity which shall result in the free and helpful use of all the faculties: and these are, the brain to comprehend, the hand to perform the brain's behest, and, above and crowning all, the feelings quick to respond to the noblest *stimuli* and the soul capable of appreciating beauty and righteousness. To turn this upside down and make mere utility the apex is to train slaves instead of free and fine human beings.

If women in latter-day America are keeping alive the cultural in education, all honor to them as conservators in a time of need. It does not mean in them an instinct for the decorative, as some supinely seem to imagine, but a truer, deeper and finer realization of what education, rightly defined, in reality is and ever





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will be. Their view of it is enlightened and the contrary view belongs in Boeotia, not in the land we love. There is ironic humor in the spectacle of men worrying about "feminization" and patronizing the other sex which likes "effeminate" studies, when the very studies thus stigmatized are the studies they themselves need in order to avoid a lopsided development and to use in the training of the nation if we would not have our civilization half-baked.

Woodrow Wilson, whose literary accomplishments are for the time submerged in his political activities, has paid his compliments to this absurdly crass notion of culture in his penetrating paper entitled "Mere Literature." All who believe that literature offers itself primarily as a kind of plaything for women are recommended to read this for more and much-needed light.

In view of the rapidly changing position of woman in modern society, it may well happen that within an appreciable time no need will longer exist to slur the sex by the opprobrious use of words such as "effeminate," "feminine," "womanish," where the accompanying sneer is but half-suppressed. It is probable that just as the obnoxious word "female," used so freely less than a century ago to designate the gentler sex, has pretty much disappeared from the vocabulary of good society and is relegated to its application in references to the lower animals, so these others will in turn perish from polite usage, except as they carry

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with them a more gracious connotation. It may even be that such a phrase as the "feminization of culture," so far from awakening terror in the timorous bosom of the masculine educator, may become an honorable term of praise, not reproach, and be taken to imply what is a fact now, and will be then: that it has been given to women to see clearer in this great matter of education. They refuse to put the cart before the horse; and when they show marked preferences for the study of letters and music and art as branches of learning, they offer the world an object-lesson in relative values and the proper purpose of civilization.

The protracted discussion will have served its purpose if, after the smoke of battle has cleared away, it can be seen a little plainer than before that the spirit is more than bread; that a specific intellectual attainment is only the beginning of an education in the broad, genial and noble sense. The culture that makes character, that is the aim; and contact with the best that has been thought and said in the world, which is Arnold's definition of literature, will not produce weaklings, but rather the citizens which are a nation's proudest asset.

## Culture, "Culchah" and Common Sense

**I**T is wonderful, the tyranny of a word. Pronounce "culture" as if it were spelt "culchah," and the laugh or sneer follows, expressive of the contemptuous attitude of mind. It may even be doubted if the dignified and noble conception which lies behind Arnold's famous use of this noun does not in the minds of many, or most, carry with it an idea not helpful to its welfare. The facetious spelling, in truth, but registers that fact. What is there of opprobrium in its significance? Why do plain people look a little askance when "culchah" enters? If an injustice is done the word, and what it stands for, we should know it and rectify our mistake. If there be some reason for the view or feeling, culture should be made aware of the criticism and strive to mend her ways.

The Murray Dictionary, that master scholar work of our time now fast moving towards completion after a generation of devoted labor from thousands of specialists, does us all the service of indicating the first use of any word in the tongue, with the quotation embodying it. In the case of "culture," one finds that it came into our speech in 1483, when Caxton, forever

## **Culture, "Culchab" and Common Sense**

famed as the man who introduced printing in England, wrote: "When they depart from the culture and honor of their God." In the early seventeenth century we find Hobbes speaking of the Lacedæmonians and "the culture of their bodies." Later, the word is applied to the development of mind and manners, as in education. And out of this comes the modern idea of refinement.

Plainly, one may see in this evolution of meaning the notions of worship, of training, and of particular emphasis upon the refining elements of education. The narrowing of the idea to the esthetics, the use of the word in such a way as to make it in contrast with the more masculine training which makes character and best fits a man for contact with life, is evidently a secondary development, due to historical reasons and, more than anything else, arising from a misunderstanding of culture and its misuse in the hands of various foolish disciples, who, some of them vicious, but more often simply shallow and silly, brought disrepute upon a noble conception and confused the minds of many naturally sympathetic to the ideal of culture.

The silly caricature of culture is answerable for much of this disestimation of a noble thing. A brilliant young Oxford man, Oscar Wilde, came to this land to lecture years ago. He carried a flower in his hand, wore his hair long and his silk breeches short; in other words, played the fool for the notoriety there was in it. He posed in the dim light of London draw-

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ing-rooms until his kind of estheticism became a cult and Wilde a seven days' social wonder.

On the more serious side, Walter Pater was cited as one of the apostles of the movement, to call it such, for the refined paganism of his essay attitude. That clever, though now well-nigh forgotten, skit, "The Green Carnation," anonymous at the time, but now known for the work of Hichens, humorously caught some of the types of this temporary spasm of pseudo-esthetics, and kept alive the rancor of the Philistine, — a name coined, by the way, by Matthew Arnold to designate the hard-headed citizen to whom all this side of life was an abomination. Big, splendid William Morris, even he was implicated somewhat, since he revolutionized the decorative art of England, making the industrial beautiful and applied art in England endurable. As part of the general tendency may be mentioned the pre-Raphaelites of painting and the later impressionism; "isms" buzzed like flies in the air, and the very titles of novels in the eighties were of esthetic metaphor, drawn from music or painting: "In the Key of Blue," and the like. The esthetic was also applied to the culture of the body, and Delsarte had his vogue, an influence by no means yet dead.

What was good of all this has remained, what were fashion and folly, pose and pretense have, as a matter of course, died the death. To confuse the two is unfair, but not unnatural, since mankind in general judges hastily and catches its ideas on the run. But

## Culture, "Culchab" and Common Sense

we need to repeat a saying by a Latin author some two thousand years dead: "The abuse of a good thing is nothing against the thing." As well judge Ibsen by the fools who think he advocates misery for misery's sake, as well identify Browning with the devotees who make puzzles out of his poems, as regard the Wilde cult as a true representation of culture. No, it was "culchah" instead, because of the insincerity that crept into a chase of the beautiful.

Culture in the true sense, then, is manly for men and womanly for women. It means nothing more nor less than such harmonious training of the faculties of a human being, always in relation to the environment, as shall make for a higher type of civilization. Culture in distinction from education (if any real opposition exists) implies more than definite preparation for the lifework; it is a genial rounding out of a person for the purpose, not of wage alone but for the general uses of living.

We might sum it up in saying that it means an understanding of Beauty and a love for it; Beauty being that harmony and peace in the nature of things which denote principles of existence, which is in the universe both physical and psychic, in the swing of the cosmos and the mind of men. To limit so magnificent a thought to the petty confines of effeminate and modish manners is exquisitely absurd. The Beauty that is esthetic, always, in its right uses, merges into the Beauty that is spiritual; along with those other eternal

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principles, the Good and the True, a trinity that saves the world.

And whenever or wherever culture is despised, and the change of spelling or pronunciation occurs as a sign, you may rest assured that the reason is not far to seek: it is a narrow and utilitarian concept of education. To grab facts, to acquire mental powers and make oneself of use as a small but efficient part of the great machine of modern activity is a good thing, never to be contemned; but it is not culture, nor is it education, for that matter, in any broad sense and proper definition. Culture exists to supplement all such partial and unlovely training. Without it, no nation could hold up her head among her sisters, the civilized peoples of earth. With it, although her borders be not far apart and her standing army small, her head may be held high and honor and respect be hers from the children of men.

Matthew Arnold wrought valiantly to make this view obtain, to cry up what he called Hellenism, the gospel of sweetness and light. It is one of history's sardonic jests that he has been so often misunderstood, and that culture should be lightly regarded. We must not sting the hand that nourishes us.

## Vulgarizing Speech

**E**NGLISH speech has constantly to fight the encroachments of vulgarity. One of the objects of education in language is to furnish standards by which the new locution, which is legitimate, is tried and the inadmissible applicant of the gutter is rejected.

By hearing the best English in the right sort of home and listening to it on the lips of those who mingle in society, and, as well, by constant contact with it in the finest writers, past and present, one gradually comes to an instinctive sense of good usage which is far superior to the brain-born rules of grammar, whose value may be conceded within limitations.

All the while and everywhere, as I said, the assaults of shoddy English are taking place, and what is true of the life spiritual is true of the life linguistic: one must fight for the victory of purity and rightness, or righteousness, which is the same thing with a different spelling. Not only are the ignorant always with us to pull down the standard of speech, but the vicious do it, too, in their use of sundry dialects to be understood in the underworld, not of dictionary repute or civilized acceptance. Hordes of foreigners as well, Zangwill's fifty peoples from as many lands, intelligent often and



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earnestly desirous of learning the usages of good English, are uncertain of the native idioms of their adoptive tongue and, while acquiring it, manufacture all sorts of enormities, so that a Myra Kelly, a Montague Glass, or an O. Henry find occasion for much humor in reporting the mistakes and malformations of our imported citizens in the school, on the street, in the home or in the innumerable associations of work. Thus, the school and college have an exceptionally difficult task, in a country like the United States, to correct wrong, train the young in the way they should go, and counterbalance the influence of the general destructive forces so potent to nullify what they seek to instil in the way of right usage.

The problem would be made simpler than it is if there were one kind of English proper for all occasions. This is not so at all. The language written and the language spoken differ, for example, in a certain degree. The latter, the life-giving element of speech, is less formal, quicker to change, more vernacular and unconventional; when we write, we naturally and properly adopt a tone more sedate, more formal, less broken and nervous with the vibration of life. Yet, if we go too far and make the written word stilted and so far removed from actuality as to seem unnatural, we defeat the object in view, which is to give, to a form more carefully wrought and fuller of the niceties impossible to the rapid methods of spoken language, an elegance and precision not otherwise to be



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attained. As the virtue of the spoken word is radical and makes for vitality, so that of the written is conservative and makes for beauty and art. The adjustment of the two to the uses of living is no easy thing, and only the past masters of expression come to a command of English resources so that their spoken words have the finish of the printed page and their writing the easy, off-hand grace and charm of the vernacular.

Then again, English suitable for use for one purpose or for one association is not necessarily advisable for another. To give a familiar illustration, the idiom of business is by no means that of polite society. Human beings modify their speech in social relations from what it is in the office or on 'change, even as they affect another mode of dress. Yet business jargon constantly tries to push its way into circles where it has no right. A man downtown speaks of meeting a "party" on an important matter; and his wife — shudder not, I have heard it — declares at the dinner-table the same evening that her husband is detained by a "party" in the city. It is the other kind of party she should be interested in, let us agree.

Take the ubiquitous and awful word "proposition." Used at first in business circles and perhaps needed there, it has waxed so arrogant that you hear it on every side, wherever two or three are gathered together. "That's a different proposition" is sickeningly familiar to the jaded ear, and may be now taken to refer to anything from a comparison of the beauty of women to a state-

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ment of a new turn in the Balkan imbroglio. Can you imagine Dr. Holmes or James Russell Lowell saying it? A "Society for the Suppression of 'Proposition'"—save in its proper meaning and place—should be formed, with a membership made up of all who retain the feeling for sound English usage.

In the same fashion, each and every sport: baseball, football, racing—what you will—has its special lingo, and, not content with using it for its own purposes, would ask us to enlarge the general vocabulary to include its racy, not to say horse-racy, expressions. It takes a long and enthusiastic devotion to the cause to read with full appreciation the talk of the gentlemen of the press, whose duty it is to keep us posted concerning the national game. For vigor and vitality it is often admirable, and it surely possesses that indescribable but unmistakable sense of humor which is one of our proudest American assets. At the same time, it is not quite the English of sobriety and sweet savor which those who know regard as best worth while.

So delicate are these distinctions that it may even be asserted that, on the spoken side, there is a speech for men and another for women. A vigorous use of idiom suits the male handler of English which may not be at all well for the other sex. The girls in school and college who ape the masculine in this respect and deem it the last note of modernity to talk "an' they were men" are hard to endure, either as users of speech or



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as human beings. For them, silence is indeed golden. It is one of the peculiar dangers of co-education that, in addressing classes nominally considered as units, the teacher of language is really talking to two sets of people, whose instinct with regard to speech uses should differ even as does their sex. It would be as absurd to claim that an idiom fit for the one is necessarily as fit for the other, as to expect an Englishman to speak French like a Parisian.

So the incessant vulgarization goes on, and we should be in a very bad way indeed — much worse off than we are — were it not happily true that purifying influences are also steadily at work: a vast body of noble literature acting as a tremendous safeguard against corruption; and the presence of a large number of persons — small, to be sure, in relation to the whole population, but authoritative out of proportion to their number — so trained to speak the tongue that, in public and in private, they act as the conservators of a language which for some twelve centuries has embodied in suitable form the choicest thought and feeling of our race.

## Current Educational Ideals

ALL through June the word "education" is dinned into one's ears until it is pardonable if impatience at its mere mention is bred in the mind of man. Up and down the land young folk have been or are being graduated, and sundry wise men—or women—are addressing them on the difference between school and life, the proper relation of the various aspects of human endeavor, and the meaning and use of mental and moral development. Wisdom has been rife and the very air has buzzed with pedagogic theories. It is a comfort to reflect that the schools and colleges have ceased from troubling for a season, that vacation is on, and the strain and stress are temporarily over. If a superfluity of talk about education were tantamount to getting it, few would escape knowledge in these recent days of universal exploitation of educational ideals. All the same, few words used by mortals are still of looser significance, more Protean in meaning, less stable in the mouths of men. Education meant one thing a thousand years ago; quite another thing five hundred years afterward; and at present differs as much or more from the theory and practice of a century since as did that century from an



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earlier age. And although it seems hard to believe, it is highly probable that a period later than our own will look back patronizingly upon this day as dark enough in the essentials of consciously directed human evolution. For education is a growth, changing as man himself learns, O how slowly and tortuously, about his needs and capacities in relation to this world which is his environment.

It is rather unfortunate that education has come to be confined as an idea to certain very prescribed and definite activities connected with school, college, and university. It gives a sort of exclusive and almost aristocratic implication to the term; it suggests that some (the minority) get educated, in distinction to the vast horde who do not go through the mysterious process. It makes the self-educated person — an absurd phrase for an absurd notion, since if you yourself do not do it, nobody else will — adopt a deprecatory attitude before the more fortunate individual who has the educational *cachet*. I have seen human beings who never went to college so richly, broadly cultured that they made the average college graduate seem like a Bushman, yet at an apparent disadvantage because no sheepskin hung on their walls.

Properly defined, of course, education is no such cramped and limited thing as this. It is a word broad enough to include all the influences and agencies which serve to develop the potential powers of a human being in such symmetry as to make him of maximum value

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to himself and to his fellow-men. In this sense, education begins in the cradle and is not over at the grave.

The particular contribution of our own time to this ever-changing conception seems to be a broadening of the older academic standard in the direction of so-called practical and utilitarian uses. Manual education, the industrial, technological, agricultural, and economic, are all getting full recognition; education that is vocational, occupational, wage-earning, has a hearing as never before. Popular sympathy is plainly with the training that looks to early financial results, that is as far away as may be from the old-time consecration to the classics. At the commencement exercises of a large state institution this month, the heartiest applause of the day was for the group of young women who stood on the stage to receive their degree as bachelors of domestic science. There is a general and growing feeling that education, once a matter of exclusive privilege and class distinction, has become so practical and democratic that any sort of training which fits a human being for any sort of definite work, and so makes him a better, more useful member of society, is good and must be given to the student.

The underlying principle of the elective system of studies, introduced a generation ago with Harvard as special sponsor, is a recognition of a phase of the same thing: namely, that the student has special aptitudes, and that those aptitudes should be discovered and favored by the educational authorities, instead of



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trying to fit all students alike upon the Procrustean bed of mathematics, literature and philosophy, according to the sacred trilogy of old. Science, during the modern period, has loomed up a very giant in its demands upon the capacity of all who study, and in its many applied uses has triumphantly justified its utilitarian worth. Philosophy has prospered in the popular regard only when, as psychology, it flowers again and demonstrates that there is usefulness in a knowledge which, in a police court, can say a wise word concerning the blood pressure of a criminal or discover the trouble with a defective child in the juvenile criminal class. Mathematics is still tolerated, since without it science in general could not exist. But poor literature, claiming to be an end in itself, to be for the high pleasure and eternal profit of man, and nothing else, has been put rather on the self-defensive in these latter days. How does a knowledge of poetry help wages or advance a man in business? has been a frequent cry. Therefore, down with letters!

That there is much of good in all this it were idle to deny. The thought that education is not for the few but for the many; that a Chautauqua scheme of study can do much to supply the gap left by missing the regular collegiate drill; and that training for life cannot be arbitrarily limited, as in the past, to a few traditional studies, given undue emphasis because of the conservative instinct in human nature and the undiscovered realms of knowledge, is all so admirable and



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beneficial to the world at large that it is an ideal worth fighting for and justifies the dust of conflict which has in our day at times confused the issues and made education look at certain moments like a travesty of the real thing.

And yet one may see something of danger in this hopeful modern situation. The tendency to regard the practical, wage-securing training and the cultural training as one, not two, is and always will be wrong. Vocational education aims to prepare the individual for a specific lifework; culture prepares him for life in the broader sense, so as to put him on a higher plane of living, and to get most out of life in the way of broad, genial, fruitful contact. The professional training takes care of a man downtown during his office hours; the cultural studies take care of and make profitable his hours with his family, at home and in society. Both are legitimate, both valuable, but they must be kept apart in any wise scheme of education. The frequent tendency to regard them as one in the curriculum, or to ignore either for the sake of the other, can only be productive of evil results, and educators to-day should safeguard both and with lynx-eyed watchfulness conserve the dual interests.



## Thought and Its Expression

**K**NOW what you have to say," announces the trainer of youth, "and then say it. A clear thought will give clear expression."

It would all be very simple and nice, if this were only so. But it overlooks the sad fact that to have a thought involves language; that you cannot have a thought unless it come to you in words; and that there is such a curiously chemical relation between thinking and saying, thought and expression, that to separate the two is a scholastic exercise rather than a human possibility.

Here is one of the many pitfalls of style,—your manner of expression which, perchance, gives what you call your thought distinction, personality. The way you put it has a remarkable habit of running away with what you wish to put, until it really seems as if the manner settled the matter. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to declare that not even a Kant or a Spencer, in stating his particular philosophic views, expresses his intellectual attitude quite independent of the language in which it is couched. Nobody—mathematician, philosopher, scientist—can reach a point where, superbly aloof from words, he can present his concep-

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tions to the world. The very word "concept" hints of the influence of language. This is true in especial, when the manner of speech takes on those imaginative and emotional qualities which give it value as literature. Language, which is intended to reveal thought, may also decorate it, fortify it, change it and sometimes hide it for the purposes of fun or satire or cunning virtuosity of display. Language, which is supposed to state, suggests instead; in place of proving, it hints, and by the use of many a deft innuendo and indirection, wins its sinuous way into our feelings. Strictly, we might say, when words begin persuasion takes the place of proof, and pleasure interferes with the exactitude of pure brain functioning.

Take an illustration. George Meredith, in "Diana of the Crossways," speaks of "thoughts that are bare, dark outlines, colored by some old passion of the soul, like towers of a distant city seen in the funeral waste of day." This fine sentence certainly means something for the mind, but it does not stop there. On the contrary, it means far more to the imagination and emotion, and it is fair to it to say that its thought value is secondary to such effects. And so is it ever with the masters of speech. They stand where they do because of their power to give these overtones of sentiment to the activities of thought.

Probably the better advice to the would-be writer, therefore, is to tell him to dive down into his consciousness and find an interest and a conviction, and then to



## **Thought and Its Expression**

begin to get them into expression. There will be, and should be, blood in it and bias, which make for personality. If only the writer's interest be strong and sincere enough, what he says will rise to the emotional plane and be of all the more worth for that reason. His thought as such may be of little or no value, because of youth and inexperience; but an honest spurt of feeling, a belief that has back of it the rush of conviction or the arterial tide of passion, is sure to create for itself a fitting garment of words. "Have something to say," might better be written, "Believe something, feel something, and then say it."

Thus may we modify the time-honored instruction to think clearly, whereupon the clear expression will take care of itself. A fallacy lurks in it, and, all the rhetorics to the contrary notwithstanding, it will not go far to help the student toward the truth. This is not to argue against lucidity and simplicity; far from it. It is only to confess frankly that words shape thought quite as truly as thought shapes language. If it were the fact that a thought could arise in the human mind, and the thinker go out and acquire the suitable clothing for it by selection and adaptation, this idea might be accepted. Language would then be strictly a garment for thought and the two could be studied apart. But if you will take the trouble to watch a single thought from the moment it comes into your self-consciousness until the expression of it, spoken or written, you will discover that it is associated with words, not

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in the sense of addition and adornment but in a far more vital way: words being blood of its blood and bone of its bone. Philologists divide into schools over the question whether, in human evolution, thought precedes words, or the reverse. But practically, you never will catch them apart; their connection is that of the Siamese Twins.

It is well to appreciate this, because it sets us right toward style and saves us from the cheap and shallow notion that it is a thing less important than thought and to be artificially separated from it: a kind of device, to be tolerated and at times even applauded, but at the best a sort of poor relation to the noble thinking process. As a matter of fact, that process could not exist at all without the self-expression which gives it point, understanding, attraction, yes, being. "In the beginning was the Word."

That idea of style — which is really the personal way of saying a thing so that it may be understood and give pleasure — as if it were a detached trick, something that can be added after the thought has been evolved, is still taught in the schools, more or less, to the injury of all concerned. It justifies the Philistine scorn of it as a parlor accomplishment, a superficial prettification, the business of idlers and degenerate esthetes. If your average citizen could grasp the truth that he, too, has a style in verbal expression, and that it is, as a rule, pretty bad, a fellow-feeling might give him more breadth of mind on this matter.



## **Thought and Its Expression**

Finding himself cursed with style, anyway, he might seek to improve it. Think he must, in his business, his profession; and as he may not think without expression, words, and a manner of words, it behooves him to mend his ways.

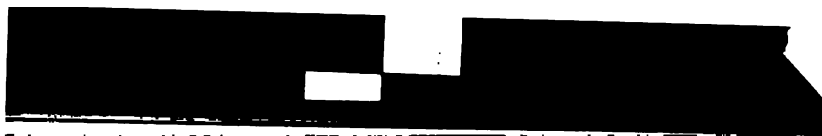
But it is upon the unfortunate school children that the wrong view falls heaviest. Poor dears, they have a hard time of it at the best, and to teach them that their crude, inchoate chunks of thought must be dragged forth by a kind of Cæsarian operation and then, while yet unaccustomed to the pitiless light of day, be gaily decked out with "words, words, words," is to add a quite unnecessary extra burden to their sufficient scholastic woes. No, teach them to live, quicken their interest, widen their horizon of knowledge, let them react ever more freely to life's *stimuli*, and you will find that—just because they are increasingly alive—they will develop ideas, and those ideas will inevitably take the form of words in a synchronous process. If one has not reacted to life at all, neither thought nor words will come. The condition of worthy thought linked to worthy expression is to have lived. Teach the pupil that the word is an organic exponent of the thought, and that both thought and word are one in the deepest sense, and he will rise up and call you blessed,—and incidentally become a better writer, or human being expressing his thought through the inevitable mode of language.





**Facetiae**





## Concerning the Jackass

**C**OLERIDGE did a unique thing in writing a serious lyric on a young ass tethered near its mother by the roadside. It was a daring literary venture, since the very connotation of the word implies comedy or contempt. But Coleridge felt otherwise; his feeling was that of pity and affection:

Poor little foal of an oppressed race,  
I love the languid patience of thy face,

— he began, and later apostrophized him thus:

Innocent foal, thou poor despised forlorn,  
I hail thee brother,— spite of the fool's scorn.

Here the poet seems either to harbor the thought that the donkey is not the ass he is taken to be, or else that man is his fellow-ass without knowing it. It may be both thoughts were in his mind.

For, in truth, is this particular variant of the brute kind so deserving of the stigma of the ages as our language would imply? The mule, with neither pride of pedigree nor hope of posterity, is indeed in piteous case, and may properly stand as a synonym of stupidity. But to impute to the gentle, long-eared ass a similar attribute would seem to be laying the last straw upon an already overburdened back.

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For some of the ass's characteristics are anything but asinine in the vulgar sense. We accuse him of slowness: yet what quadruped tamed by man is swifter than the hardy little Neapolitan donkey, which darts from street to street as the swallow from cliff to cliff? Slow to anger he is, of a verity, for the cabbies in the city by the wondrous bay are cruelty personified; and of all things surely not slow-footed.

And again, if our donkey's head be foolish, yet are his feet both slow and sure when those qualities are needed; I mean when you bestride your burro and climb eight or ten thousand feet up a California mountain, with one leg most of the time dangling over a canyon fifteen hundred feet below; how wonderful then is this beast, and how one relies upon him in the hour of peril! It may be added that the slowness of the ass refers to the domestic variety, for the wild ass of the Orient (like him of the human family) is noted for being swift.

But, it is said, the ass is obstinate. There be times when, planting his forefeet squarely in front of him, and with a bray of triumphant rage, he becomes granite-like in immobility, recalling Scott's line:

This rock shall fly  
From its firm base as soon as I.

The question here is, What do you mean by obstinate? The men who held the pass at Thermopylæ were obstinate, in the sense that they



### Concerning the Jackass

held their ground, and history has justified, nay, applauded them to the echo. Did they have a sufficient reason for blocking the way? That is the only proper query. So with our friend the ass. Is he stupid, stopping without rhyme or reason; or, on the other hand, is his driver an ass, whose attitude is an epitome of unreasonableness? The trouble between the two has never been rightly adjudicated; we have never heard from the donkey. With dignified reserve he refrains from speech (he does not even vent one bray under the excusable circumstances), and simply sticks, all belaborings and profane objurgations to the contrary.

I would give a shiny silver coin to look into his face and know just why. My misgivings as to his motives are as naught compared with what I feel concerning his two-footed boss who tries to compel him with a club. About his idiocy I am sure, whereas Mr. Donkey's is only a matter of tradition. Suppose the driver, in the spirit of Coleridge, had whispered kindnesses, fed him sugar, or chanted a couplet of good fellowship; will anybody in his senses dare say the issue might not have been happy?

Stevenson's Modestine (a darling creature) needed, I grant you, the unhallowed staff; but then Modestine was an arrant little coquette, with all the airs, graces and innuendoes of her type. It were as unfair to judge ass-kind by a Modestine as to judge woman-kind by a Helen of Troy. Moreover, let it be remem-

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bered that in the end she showed the deeper qualities of her sex: eating cleanly out of her master's hand, a perfect lady in her daintiness, and so loving him that when he had to sell her he shed unashamed tears. Mayhap it is the hybrid mule who is mulishly set in his own opinion, rather than the patient, long-suffering ass, whose name is so unjustly a laughing-stock among men.

A jackass is defined by the dictionary as "male ass, — hence, a stupid or ignorant person." Really, one objects to that "hence." It involves a most illegitimate inference. The ass has been maltreated in history and fact, and even the mule maligned. To be sure-footed and steady-headed, patient and silent, denied by fate a sweet voice, yet so generous as seldom to punish us with the raucous cry of which he is capable; docile as a pet, yet valiant on the road; to serve, to suffer and to be silent, that is the Saga of the ass, and one he need not be ashamed of. He has been the friend of man, humble, faithful, and unappreciated, for unreckoned generations in the Occident. In the Orient, in ancient days, it is pleasant to recall, in view of his virtues, that he flaunted it like any aristocrat; to ride into the city upon his back was to enter like a prince. If the donkey ever indulges in retrospect, how sadly must he hark back to early days in his original eastern habitat, gaily caparisoned, high fed, sleek and favored. To pass from this to a life of straitened toil and subjugation is indeed a come-



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down suggesting the irony of fate for biped or quadruped.

If the ass now seem meek, homely, and subsidiary to the horse, we should try to detach ourselves from tradition and to detect in his look of meek amiability a sort of suppressed wisdom,—undeniable traces of a great past. Looks against looks, he is quite the equal of the horse to-day, with more of intelligence and spirituality (if not spirit) in his physiognomy.

Literature should take account of all this misunderstanding of *equus asinus*, an animal both useful and ornamental in his best estate, of high moral qualities, and a pleasant companion withal; it should in poem, essay and fiction so draw this four-footed bearer of burdens that he shall take his rightful place in the animal kingdom. Coleridge gave a hint of what might be done,—let others follow example. As the human race evolves, justice will be done the donkey. Already, such is our friendly and affectionate feeling for the dog as a type that the word is not so bitter in the mouth as it was when Shylock hurled it. The ass in time will no longer connote the fool; and the human jackass, member of an association perhaps the largest in the world, will perforce take another name.

## The Essence of Humor

'HE is a fine man and she is very nice, but they have no sense of humor,"—how often you hear the remark. Whenever I do, I secretly wonder just what is meant, and how humor is to be defined. Because, not seldom, on meeting the persons referred to, I find them quite capable of smiling on occasion, and apparently responsive to a joke. It becomes evident that "one man's meat is another man's *poisson*," as Oliver Herford has it, in this matter of fun.

What, indeed, is the essence of humor? The subject may be light, but the question is a serious one, because very difficult. Perhaps we shall come at it, although with no pretense of a complete answer, if we say that to have that precious thing, a sense of humor, is to possess a perception of the harmless incongruity that is in life. And this perception must center in man, for detached from him it does not exist; there is no humor in a landscape, for example, unless in some way man is injected into it.

The incongruity must be harmless and salutary, note, because a great deal of life's incongruity is tragic: as where a demented person breaks into laughter at a



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funeral, or a corpse is jolted into an absurd posture. The juxtaposition of unlike things, which might be regarded as a paraphrase for incongruity, is of many kinds: external and internal, physical or mental; but always the principle of the unexpected setting together of things not commonly associated will be found beneath. To see a short man linked by marriage with a tall grenadier of a woman is funny, as an external spectacle, simply for the reason that the convention is the other way: we expect the husband to be the taller. In Mars it may well be that the association of ideas is the reverse; and we should shriek with merriment to see a tall man and his short wife go by. If a decorous and solemn citizen of the town is precipitated on a snowy morning on the sidewalk, and his silk hat goes careening into the gutter, we are likely to snicker in spite of ourselves. Why? Because such gyrations are the furthest possible removed from the gentleman's usual manner of locomotion. Then, too, humanity at large does not plan to have such accidents happen, so that there is a double incongruity in the scene.

When a man who is the best representative of hypocrisy in the city harangues his fellow-citizens from a public platform, in all seriousness, against the very sin of which he is the living embodiment, we get an illustration of that subtler, inward incongruity which rises into the region of satiric comedy; the kind of picture an Aristophanes or an Ibsen would delight to



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paint for us. And so on with other incongruities not a few, objective or subjective.

When the fun is full of kindness and heart, it gives us humor in contrast with that other sort of fun which we call wit; for wit is the humor of the intellect. If our individual brain, for instance, supplies at once the omitted links in a story, so that we see the point as soon as do others, or, better yet, a little before them, we laugh not only at the relationship hitherto unsuspected between two things, but also because our intellect was so very bright as to make the connection without difficulty. The subtler the connection the more we felicitate ourselves. Thus there is an element of intellectual pride in this sort of comic appeal, which commonly uses indirection as its method; a method in which American humor, by the way, is especially skilful and the subtlety of which is supposed to bother our oversea cousins, the British.

Humor, to the philosophic mind, is the relief from the tragic nature of life which humanity in self-defense seizes on from time to time. We speak of "comic relief" in drama in another sense; but relief it is in a deeper significance. That a nation is humorous, therefore, seeming to have a genius for fun, does not imply light-mindedness but, on the contrary, depth of nature. Humor is one of the cardinal characteristics of our native letters; and to me it indicates the serious, strenuous (I insist on not giving up a good word simply because it has been overworked) nature of the



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American life and disposition; pushed on by climate, burning the candle at both ends in the fierce competitive struggle,—if we did not laugh, we should die. The animals do not laugh; they have no sense of humor. Why so? Surely, for the reason that they have no self-conscious perception of this doomful world.

What is true of the nation is true of the individual; a great humorist—not a mere mountebank whose verbal somersaults in the paper amuse us for the moment—is always one who has a big, sympathetic, sensitive soul, terribly aware of the tragic possibilities of the ticklish business of living. Aristophanes, Rabelais, Molière, Heine, Mark Twain,—they are brothers under the skin in this respect. And their highest function is found in the way in which they make us smile the sympathetic smile of tolerance, pity, and fellow-feeling, thereby uniting mankind in the fraternity of the heart. Great as is humor's mission in the satiric laughter which drives out sham and folly and pretense, there can be no doubt that the humor of a Dickens at his best has the precious touch which makes the whole world kin, and becomes both an enheartening influence and a reformatory force. Not satire, but love, is its dominating spirit.

We may be sure that whenever the so-called humorist fails to meet this test of an underlying seriousness of intention, a failure to recognize the sort of world we live in, his permanence may be doubted; nay, we



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may refuse him the title, "humorist," in the finer meaning of the word. He is a "funny man," and that is all.

The deadly thing about fun that is forced is that it is the result of brain-fagged pressure, instead of bubbling spontaneously up from the heart; and this applies to punning as well as to the other forms of humor which seem less intellectual. A truly splendid pun, like one of Lamb's, Sidney Smith's or Oscar Wilde's, is an electric flash; and the ignition occurs at the moment when the brain seizes with lightning-like rapidity upon a thought emanating from the heart. In the case of the poor pun, however,—is there anything sadder this side of Charon's boat? The heartfelt spontaneity lacks, and the miserable, jaded brain is asked to do its work all alone.

Blessed be humor, through whose kindly power we shame man out of his many foolishnesses, and set him in sympathetic contact with his kind, while easing his soul from the strain of life.



## A Suppressed Instinct

**M**AN to-day has become the undecorated animal, while woman flaunts the gay plumage. Man used to wear it, and now he only pays for it,—if he can. If we had no recourse to history, it might appear that this was in the nature of things, but we know better. Go back only so far as the eighteenth century, and we see the male gladly making himself beautiful with ruffles and small-clothes, many-colored waistcoats and full-bottomed wigs. His personal vanity, now for several generations pretty well concealed and suppressed, was given the chance in the elder days to flower out in his garb and he walked forth appareled like the sun.

In the Elizabethan time, the dress of a courtier was such that the head spins to read of it; there was as much difference between a gallant then and now as between a peony and a fountain pen. Even in the early part of the nineteenth century, we are told how the young Disraeli wore lace ruffles at the end of his coat sleeves, so long that he had to turn them back to grasp his fork at table. Bulwer Lytton was another exquisite whose garments were resplendent; and Dickens as a youth rivaled any buck going in the variegated

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splendor of his vesture, and clung to a flamboyant attire into later life, so that when he came to America for his second reading tour in 1867, he still dressed in a manner to awaken the ire or amusement of the sober, black-garbed Puritans of this land. There are folk yet living to tell us of his chains and rings, his wondrous waistcoats and spectacular scarves. It was all an innocent retention of the days of the Regency, a clinging in late manhood to the habits of a quarter of a century before. It must have been piquant indeed to live in those days of exuberant apparel and frank devotion to bodily adornment.

Then, later, came a time of penance, if not of prayer. The colorful picturesqueness gave way to a sad uniformity of black. Man went among his fellows reduced to a dark monotony of clothes, and the cut thereof left no room for the decorative ideal. Instead of the jaunty bonnet of yore, with its debonair feather, he donned the unspeakable ugliness of the derby; where once were knee-breeches and handsome silk stockings, shapeless pantaloons hid the contour of his nether extremities, and the legitimate pride in seemly calves was no more. Frilled shirt fronts were replaced by the uncompromising, icy glare of the modern substitute, and at evening assemblies he who was once the cynosure of all eyes was now hopelessly confused with mere waiters and butlers. All was a dead level of negative commonplace and drab, grave-like nonentity.



## **A Suppressed Instinct**

Can it be that this transformation has not had its accompanying effect upon character? Does not man suffer from this suppressed instinct of decoration, so natural, so deep-seated,—as we are aware whenever we observe the holiday aspect of the male bird, in comparison with the modestly dressed feminine mate whom he courts; or, from a safe distance, admire the noble markings of the male lion beside his maneless mate? Here is grave matter for the modern philosopher, whose business it is to study the inward effect of outer habits and customs. Is it not possible to touch upon one of many consequences of this mournful modern rehabilitation of a creature who of old time was beautiful to look upon? Is it not more than likely that the withdrawal of man from the field of competitive ornament, leaving woman sole possessor therein, has led her into unnatural efforts of extravagant display? A shallow reasoner might here reply that, competition on the part of man being removed, woman has less incentive to decoration. But this is a wretched quibble. For the spirit of emulation is constantly inflamed by fellow-woman; and, moreover, when man was still decoratively active, he deflected a large part of the available money from the feminine wardrobe, and so limited the possibilities. And, let it be remembered, clothes always have cost cash — though so many beaux and belles did not pay their bills — and, after all, there is only so much money to spend. Man's retirement as a dressy object has indeed wrought incalculable harm; it has

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made the world less agreeable as a spectacle, and it has tempted his partner in the parade to excesses of display which make the thoughtful observer shudder. We should have harmony of dress, both sexes participating in a general result of charm that blends to make an artistic whole; in place of which what we really see is a lopsided emphasis upon only one aspect of the infinite opportunities for personal expression in one's clothes. Half the human race has thus been shut out from the privilege of pleasing the taste by dress. Could unfair repression or unequal rights further go?

In the light of these melancholy reflections, it is all the pleasanter to observe the feeble yet obvious movement toward a brighter and more varied attire in man. To suppress any good instinct is dangerous, and as a rule brings its inevitable reaction. The suppressed desire to decorate and delight the eye, so long sternly rebuked by fashion, has of late years given signs of rebellion; man has dared, albeit timidly, apologetically, to don a color here and there, to break away from the horrid uniformity of black, and to remind the world that he was, in happier days, a lover of decoration in his own person. His waistcoats have become many-hued, if still prevailingly sober. He has worn nattily, upon a head for painful years disfigured by the derby or the silk topper, the soft fedora or the rakish cap. His shirts, white and stiff of yore, have broken out into a very revel of chromatic insubordination, and are made of textures that, unstarched and silky, have ministered



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to his comfort, while making the eye glad. His ties, too, have run the gamut of hues, his shoes changed from black to tan, his handkerchiefs, like butterflies in the air, flaunted the prismatic tints. He has bought him suits that a generation since would have been looked at askance, if they had not actually injured his social standing.

In short, he has at last escaped from the grim prison of restraint where for a pensive period he has languished in darkness and neglect, and now again taken his rightful place before society. Not that he is yet the rival of woman in the decorative battle; no, she is still supreme, for price and power. But he is no longer an entirely negligible factor; that is the point. All the indications are that from this time out he will more and more, gaining courage as he ventures, assume the glory that was Brummel and the grandeur that was Nash. Thus, in the fullness of time, shall a proper equilibrium be struck, and man and woman, in the great future that we so confidently expect for the two sexes, move side by side, each beautiful to the other, and the wardrobe of both the wonder of a world. Evolution does most plainly promise us this happy day.



## Of Darkness and Light

**M**ARK TWAIN in his last years, as all the world knows, steadily wore his famous white suit, and it was referred to in some quarters as an example of silly, old-age vanity, to be forgiven only in a man of genius. That Mark Twain did it, explained but could not excuse it in the eyes of those who were too blind to understand.

This was a most shallow reading of the fact. There was much more in it than appears on the surface. Mark Twain was that rare thing, an absolutely original human being, who dared to be himself, while the run of humanity tamely imitates, follows and irons out individuality. The master humorist once gave his own reasons for the alleged idiosyncrasy: "When a man reaches the advanced age of seventy-one years, the continual sight of dark clothing is likely to have a depressing effect upon him. Light-colored clothing is more pleasing to the eye and enlivens the spirit. Now, of course, I cannot compel every one to wear such clothing just for my especial benefit, so I do the next best thing, and do it myself."

Could anything be saner, truer, more penetrating in its implied criticism of conventions? Mankind bows

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to the tyranny of the dark from the day when he dreads to go to bed in it to that when he associates it with the last sad rites or uses it as a metaphor of the passing away from this present life, from "the glorious sun-colored earth." And in nothing is this truer than in its application to clothes. Carlyle has dilated long since on the shams that are masked under the garbs and habits of this world; but a special chapter should be written upon the effect of our external habiliments, according to the color which they show.

Reflect on our customs and associations in this matter. With the masculine half of the universe at least, the "customary suits of solemn black" go with occasions that are formal, serious, grave or outright sad. It is only of late years that man has dared more or less feebly to break away from the time-honored and purely conventional notion that it is more seemly to adopt funereal dress for almost every function of life save those of business and outdoor pleasure. Women have exercised more freedom than men in this respect: a curious reflection, since the spindle sex is supposed to be more conservative, less subject to change than the spear side of the house. Nowadays, and very rapidly, we have come to realize that it is pleasant and not unrighteous to wear colors of cheerfuller aspect.

But how we sinned in the past in this respect! How for many of us Sunday was a lugubrious day because it meant clothing not only stiff and uncomfortable,

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but also clothing gloomily somber, merging with the general gloom of the old penitential Sabbath. The small boy brought up in this fashion could not be blamed if he imbibed the idea that Christians were a sort of people who preferred darkness to light; for whom a day was set apart in which the black clothes worn were a symbol of the sinful state within. The association of black, too, with death and all that thereto belongs is certainly of questionable worth, and not a few signs to-day point to an appreciation of the theory that we have, to put it mildly, overdone the custom: those who have lost dear ones do not now always, for such protracted periods or to such a degree, bury themselves in the mournful signs of woe. The proper respect and devotion to the well-remembered and loved can never pass away. But the formal, conventional outer indications thereof may be mitigated to the advantage of all concerned. The test is within, not without, as the great words of Isaiah imply: "I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul."

Winter is a time of less color than summer, in nature the whites and duns and browns predominate; and all unconsciously, perhaps, we dress accordingly, and one of the many joys of the returning spring (this applies in special force to the male of the race) is to be found in the gayer garments donned by men, reflecting in their very persons the chromatics of Nature, the freer, fuller, more natural outdoor life heralded by the change of seasons.



## Of Darkness and Light

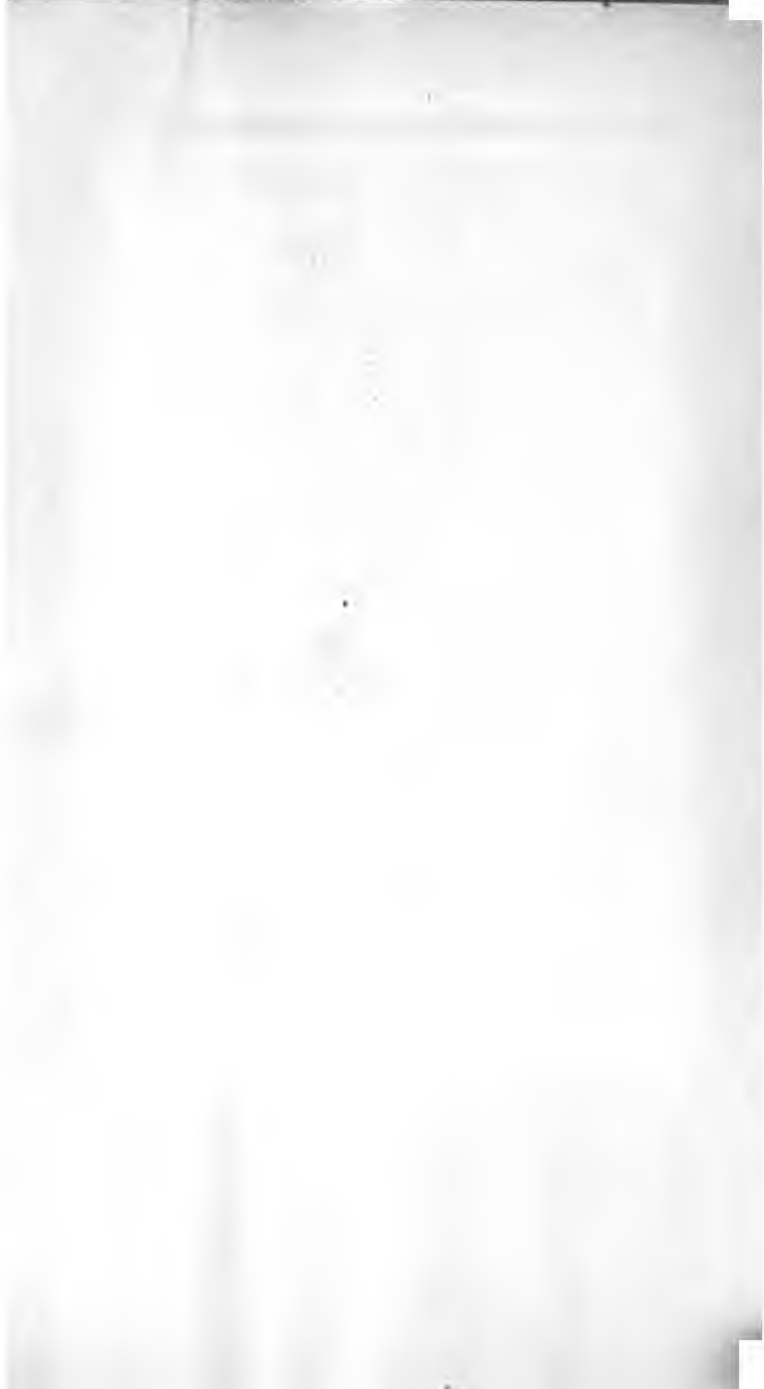
Nor should it be forgotten that color has its psychology, so that the hue of garments bears a close relation to the mood of the wearer and helps to create that mood. Recent laboratory investigations are making us understand as never before that when the cheerful yellow of sunlight or the restful green of trees, or again the violent reds and purples of some decoration are spoken of, the language is not mere rhetoric and metaphor, but the statement of a fact. Other things being equal, a comedy scene on the stage that is set in yellow will play best, and so will an emotional scene that is set in red. The human instinct to put on bright, light, joyous clothes is far more than a primitive desire for personal adornment; it is an impulse toward happiness, a craving for life, a repugnance from all that means deprivation, darkness and death. It is all part of the human aspiration for light, the longing which called forth the memorable death-bed utterance of Goethe: "Mehr Licht!" It gleams out in that passage in Revelation: "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

One may make a shrewd guess that the wish to wear black was not at one time in the history of the world that of a normal, untutored, unthinking, spontaneous human being; it has always come from some associated idea, some convention, custom or belief. And con-

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trariwise, the Mark Twain feeling for white raiment is the instinct for health and happiness. The human race would have been gladder and further along the long path which begins in a wriggle in the mud and ends in loftiest righteousness, if only it had stuck closer to this will to express externally and in person the good cheer which is so necessary a viaticum for the journey. But in stepped convention, and we dressed a part which we felt called upon to play contrary to all our feelings; soon this was frozen into a habit and seemed almost like a law of nature. It will take centuries yet before the world in general sees how sensible was the creator of "Huckleberry Finn" when he dared to be himself, to follow, at the expense of custom, a feeling rooted in a need of his nature, and in the nature of us all. A close study of Samuel Clemens will reveal that other of his so-called vagaries had the same commonsensible origin. He would not have been the great humorist he was, and is, had there not been beneath his fun a fundament of shrewd, sweet, homely wisdom. After all, it takes a very wise man to show us the humor that is to be found in life.

THE END



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